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## Tech, e-businesses book \$470M in revenue

May Kunmakara

BACKED by rapid technological and innovation development, Cambodian tech and digital businesses achieved \$470 million in revenue for 2019, according to the latest report from Asian Development Bank (ADB) released late last month.

Broken down by sectors, e-commerce accounted for 27.6 per cent,

e-services 7.8 per cent, digital media 10.2 per cent, advertising technology 12.7 per cent, transportation 3.8 per cent and online travel 37.9 per cent, the Metro Manila-based multilateral lender said in its "Asia Economic Integration Report 2021: Making Digital Platforms Work For Asia and the Pacific".

On May 28, ADB and the Ministry of Economy and Finance co-hosted a public webinar on "Digital Plat-

forms and Cambodia's Post-Covid-19 Economic Recovery".

Speaking at the event, ADB Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department chief economic and director-general Yasuyuki Sawada said the increased computing power and the access to affordable smart devices have brought digital technology into people's hands.

"The increased use of these digital

platforms is expected to continue this year and in the years to come. Based on our recent study, if digital sectors expand by 20 per cent from the 2020 baseline to 2025, global output would rise by \$4.3 trillion annually, Asia's output by \$1.7 trillion yearly," he said.

Ministry undersecretary of state Huot Pum told the webinar that the government had been preparing a Digital Economy and Society Policy

Framework—which would be launched early this month – to provide clearer policy direction for Cambodia to digitalise its economy and society and to be used as a key strategy for economic recovery after the Covid-19 crisis.

"Under this policy framework, the digital data and platforms are vital in adopting and leveraging the advanced

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## PM: Herd immunity possible by November

Mom Kunthear

WITHIN the next few days Cambodia, will have vaccinated three million people towards its target of 10 million, according to Ministry of Health spokeswoman Or Vandine. The speedy vaccination campaign has been given the slogan "Cambodia: A small country with a big heart when it comes to helping people".

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Hun Sen has decided to take control of the leadership of the National Committee to Combat Covid-19 (NCCC), with five deputy ministers as deputy chairmen.

Vandine, who is also chairwoman of the national Covid-19 vaccination commission, said: "In the next few days, we will reach three million vaccinated people as we speed up our Covid-19 vaccination campaign. Cambodia is a small country with a big heart and very lucky to have Samdech Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen to help its people get vacci-

nated as quickly as possible," she wrote on Twitter.

According to the health ministry's report on June 13, Cambodia has vaccinated 2,939,543 people nationwide – in a campaign administered by the health ministry and the Ministry of National Defence – accounting for 29.40 per cent of the target number of 10 million people vaccinated.

On June 14, defence minister Tea Banh held a meeting to summarise the results of the Covid-19 vaccination campaign for residents in the six former red zone districts of Phnom Penh.

The defence ministry launched a Covid-19 vaccination campaign to inoculate people in the capital's red zones on May 1, which ended in early June. According to the ministry's report released on June 13, a total of 141,550 people were vaccinated in that campaign.

Hun Sen will now lead all pandemic efforts directly as the NCCC. The committee's purpose is to combat, prevent

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### Smell a rat

Extinction Rebellion environmental activists put on a performance as they protest in the streets of St Ives, Cornwall during the G7 summit on Sunday. AFP

## China slams G7 for 'manipulation'

CHINA on June 14 accused the Group of Seven (G7) of "political manipulation" after it criticised Beijing over its human rights record in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, in a communique after a three-day summit in England.

A spokesman for the Chinese embassy in London said in a statement that the G7 "takes

advantage of Xinjiang-related issues to engage in political manipulation and interfere in China's internal affairs, which we firmly oppose."

The statement accused the G7 of "lies, rumours and baseless accusations".

Human rights groups allege that China has rounded up an estimated one million Uighurs

and other minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region into internment camps, which Beijing says is to eradicate Islamic extremism.

The G7 communique read: "We will promote our values, including by calling on China to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms."

In a June 12 statement, the

embassy spokesman had said: "The days when global decisions were dictated by a small group of countries are long gone."

"We always believe that countries, big or small, strong or weak, poor or rich, are equals, and that world affairs should be handled through consultation by all countries." AFP, CHINA DAILY/

ASIA NEWS NETWORK



**CAMBODIAN CADETS GRANTED MILITARY DEGREES IN RUSSIA**

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**CRF SAYS ECONOMIC STRATEGY TO BOOST MILLED RICE EXPORTS**

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## National

# CHRC, Oz discuss draft rights law

Nov Sivutha

OFFICIALS from the Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC) and the Australian embassy held discussions about work relating to human rights in Cambodia and progress on a draft law on establishing a national human rights institution.

CHRC spokesman Chin Malin told *The Post* on June 14 that during the meeting both sides had discussed progress in drafting the national human rights institution as Australia had provided input through the Asia Pacific Forum (APF)

based in Australia.

He said Cambodia had received input from Australian counterparts and completed the draft. However, both sides will hold further internal discussions before discussing it further with other organisations.

He continued that both sides had exchanged views on the political and general human rights environment in Cambodia where Australia saw a lot of positive developments, though it had also expressed concerns over exercising rights and the political situation in Cambodia.

"Australia has not expressed criticism relating to the politi-

cal situation or the general environment but just expressed its opinion," Malin said.

The CHRC, he added, had explained to Australia not to be concerned over the issue as Cambodia was always upholding the rule of law.

In its Facebook post on June 14, the embassy said that during a frank and constructive dialogue Australian Chargé d'Affaires Luke Arnold shared his assessment of human rights in Cambodia, saying progress had been made.

He noted that while there was progress, improvements are required to ensure Cambodia's

compliance with international human rights obligations it has voluntarily signed up to, including on political freedoms, freedom of association, and freedom of expression.

Arnold also noted the committee's progress in developing draft legislation for Cambodia's proposed national human rights institution, as well as the necessity for the institution to comply with the 1991 Paris Principles on National Human Rights Institutions, which include genuine independence from government, adequate powers and resources, and a diverse membership. ■

# Daun Penh tows cars parked on roadsides

Long Kimmarita

FORTY cars that were illegally parked on public roadsides have been towed away by the Daun Penh district administration following tightened rules and a ban-notice on selling used vehicles there.

Daun Penh district governor Sok Penh Vuth said on June 13 that the order was given after the administration had issued a June 8 notice banning vehicles from being parked on the roadsides for sale because it negatively affected public order, caused traffic jams and spoiled the capital's beauty.

"On Saturday, 37 cars were towed away, and on Sunday morning three cars were impounded. Of those 40 cars, nine belonged to the general public and the rest belonged to vendors who parked them along the roadsides, causing disruption to public order," he said.

He added that the police would implement the rule from now on without any exceptions. They would not allow cars to be parked, sold or stopped on the roadsides causing traffic jams, especially on roads with no-park or no-stop signs.

The cars that were towed are being kept at the district administrative lot so that their owners can come in and claim them without any fines this time, but the owners have to sign a letter agreeing to stop parking them illegally and any owners who violate the ban again could have their vehicles impounded until they pay the fines.

"So far eight car owners have signed contracts and were instructed and edu-

cated. The owners are just regular people. But we will particularly implement administrative measures more strictly against cars being put up for sale – we have to keep them for three to five days before returning them to their owners," he said.

Following the lifting of the lockdown in Phnom Penh, the district administration had observed that a small number of people had parked their cars on the roadsides to advertise them for sale. Having seen this, the district administration on June 8 issued a notice laying out some rules that banned parking or selling cars on roadsides.

According to the notice, they were given until June 12 to remove their cars from these locations. Those who failed to follow the notice would have their cars towed and the administration would not be responsible for any property damage.

A Daun Penh district resident hailed the move, saying the roads in the area were too narrow and if there were many cars parked along the roads it would make it difficult to walk and they would cause traffic jams.

However, she suggested that the authorities establish a public parking lot in the district to make it easier for people to park their cars properly to avoid parking on the road.

"It is also difficult for home owners who have cars because they do not know where to park their cars, except in front of their houses. Our area doesn't have a public parking lot," she said. ■

# Cambodian cadets granted military degrees from Russia

Long Kimmarita

SEVEN Cambodian military trainees have successfully completed their specialist degree from the Penza Artillery Engineering Institute in Penza, Russia, according to the Ministry of National Defence's department of information.

Four of the military trainees – Hem Norak Satya, Phon Narith, Keo Phally and Ung Mengly – completed their missile and artillery skills degrees.

Among the other three, Or Sovanpanha graduated with a degree in artillery radio technology, while Meas Socheatha and Ngoeurn Bunthen both received degrees in armour and electro-reflectors.

"This is the pride of the nation. All specialist degrees issued by Russian educational institutions are equivalent to a master's degree in Cambodia," the ministry said.

Oeur Kongkear, vice-chairman of the Association of Cambodian Students in the Russian Federation, told *The Post* on June 14 the association was confident that the graduates would bring unique skills gained from Russia to Cambodia for future development.

"I do not know exactly when they will return home. But



Cambodian military cadets who have earned specialist degrees at the Institute of Artillery in the Russian Federation on June 13, 2021. MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

through the skills they've acquired, they will be able to share their knowledge with the Cambodian youth," he said.

Kongkear also said the association will continue to help support all Cambodian students and military trainees who are continuing their studies in Russia to feel comfortable during their stay there.

Each year, between five and 16 Cambodians on average graduate from Russian insti-

tutions with degrees in defence related skills and other fields. The Russian government provides 16 scholarships to Cambodians each year, according to Kongkear.

He said this did not include scholarships provided by the Russia to the Cambodian government through military cooperation.

Cambodian Institute for Democracy president Pa Chanroeun congratulated the seven

military trainees on their technical and artillery engineering degrees from Russia. He said he believes that this technical training programme in Russia is a valuable resource for Cambodia.

"The government should value them and give them appropriate roles and use them properly according to the knowledge, skills and experience they have to help develop our country," he said. ■

# Hun Sen takes helm of nat'l Covid committee

Continued from page 1

and control the spread of Covid-19 in Cambodia, according to the sub-decree regarding the organisation and functions of the NCCC dated June 13.

The committee also has subordinate bodies, including the ad-hoc commission for Covid-19 vaccination, the ad-hoc commission for procurement for Covid-19 and the capital-provincial committee to combat Covid-19.

The same sub-decree adds that, where necessary, the government may establish a commission or other mechanisms at the request of the national committee to combat Covid-19.

Separately on June 14, during a meeting with newly appointed ambassador of the Czech Republic to Cambodia Martin Vavra, Hun Sen said the government was pushing hard on Covid-19 vaccinations and could reach the target number of 10 million by November. ■

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# WHO urges joint efforts in Covid fight

Mom Kunthear

**T**HE World Health Organisation (WHO) in Cambodia has urged more effective interventions and called for greater community participation to suppress Covid-19 transmission in the country, saying Cambodia is at a pivotal moment in the fight against Covid-19.

"We must do everything we can, to prevent the spread of the virus and its devastating health, social and economic effects", WHO representative Li Ailan said in a press statement on June 14.

She added that it was crucial to find more effective ways to ensure implementation of and compliance with public health measures with wider community participation.

"I fully understand that people are tired after an 18-month fight against the virus, but we have no other choice. We must step up our efforts to stop the spread of Covid-19. Everyone has a vital role to play," she said.

WHO also said if the virus spread widely enough throughout the Cambodia then large-scale restrictions and lockdowns could once again be required which affect all areas of life – businesses and employment, religious activities and social gatherings.

WHO encouraged the gov-



WHO representative to Cambodia Li Ailan and health ministry spokeswoman Or Vandine on a field visit to Kampong Thom province in June. SUPPLIED

ernment and its partners to reinforce strategic evidence-based interventions using a multi-channel and multiplatform approach to reach out and engage with communities to empower them – especially women, youths, community leaders and health workers.

"Do not miss this life saving

opportunity. Covid-19 vaccines are a very powerful tool to prevent severe disease, reduce hospitalisations and save lives," said the statement.

Separately on June 14, Minister of Information Khieu Kanharith said Cambodia could not hide Covid-19 transmission cases from the public.

"This is because the government and the health ministry are working with key development partners such as WHO and the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) to monitor developments in Cambodia and its response to the pandemic," he said in a weekly meeting with heads

of the ministry's five general directorates.

He said Cambodia and partners have cooperated to monitor the spread of Covid-19 and jointly address prevention through the introduction of various action plans and key policies by the government to combat Covid-19. ■

## Government gives funds to people in quarantine

**T**HE government will provide more than 2 billion riel (\$500,000) in financial assistance to people in all 24 provinces who quarantine from June 14-20.

In a report, the Ministry of Health said Prime Minister Hun Sen had approved funds of 2.69 billion riel to help quarantined people, especially in areas with high cases of Covid-19.

"The total number of people in quarantine nationwide is 93,463. Only Monduliri province has been spared. But money will be provided to the province as a preventative measure. Preah Sihanouk province has the most people in quarantine totalling 75,585," the report said.

The ministry added that Preah Sihanouk was followed by Battambang with 2,702 people in quarantine and received 400 million riel from the government.

Kampong Speu has 2,075 people in quarantine and receives 270 million riel, while Banteay Meanchey has 1,982 people quarantined and receives 290 million riel. Kampong Cham has 1,798 people and receives 200 million riel.

Stung Treng province has the least people in quarantine with only 32 and receives 10 million riel.

Although Monduliri province has no one in quarantine, the government provides 10 million riel. MOM KUNTHEAR



### Draft Job Announcement

The World Bank's Social Accountability and Service Delivery Trust Fund (SASD-TF) provides financial support to both demand side (NCDDS) and supply side (World Vision International) to implement the Implementation of Social Accountability Framework II (ISAF-II) 2019-2023. The World Bank is looking for a qualified Cambodian candidate to fulfill the position of ISAF CSO Coordinator.

The Coordinator will be under supervision of World Bank Trust Fund Task Team Leader and s/he will:

- Ensure all CSOs involved in the Demand-side implementation of ISAF are working in consultation and collaboration among all CSOs involved in the implementation of inclusive ISAF
- Facilitate communication and coordination between CSOs and the NCDDS
- Coordinate and support demand side to explore innovative approaches to implement ISAF II, especially in the context of Covid 19
- Support the demand side for capacity development and learning events to ISAF implementors and related stakeholders
- Collect and consolidate the monitoring and evaluation data from all CSOs and use it to develop semi-annual reports and annual reports

#### Qualifications

- Advanced university degree in development, political science or related field.
- At least 5 years of experience working with relevant international and/or local CSOs and/or government departments, preferably in Cambodia.
- Knowledge and experience on social accountability, decentralization and governance programs.
- Excellent leadership, communication and interpersonal skills are required.
- Fluent written and spoken communication skills in English.

#### Duration of assignment:

The duration of the assignment will be initially for 50 working days spread across the period of August 1, 2021 to June 25, 2022 with possibility of increasing up to 150 days depending consultant performance.

#### Deadline of application:

Interested applicants may request a full term of reference from and submit their CV and cover letter to Ms. Maly Prak, Program Assistant, [mprak@worldbank.org](mailto:mprak@worldbank.org). Closing date: June 25, 2021.

## Czech envoy set to promote ties

Ry Sochan

**DURING** a recent meeting with the newly appointed ambassador of the Czech Republic to Cambodia, Prime Minister Hun Sen discussed the strengthening of economic and human resource development ties between the two countries.

The meeting between Hun Sen and ambassador Martin Vavra was held at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh on June 14.

"Samdech Techo Hun Sen asked the ambassador to promote cooperation in the fields of the economy, trade, investment and human resource development," Hun Sen's Facebook post said.

During the meeting, Vavra told Hun Sen that his current mission to Cambodia is to strengthen and develop the relationship between the two countries.

"The ambassador said the Czech Republic is passionate about Cambodia. On this basis, he promised Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen that he would work to develop cooperation in politics, economics, trade and investment," the post said.

"Martin Vavra also informed Samdech Techo Hun Sen that the Czech Republic will also help Cambodia in human resource development," the Facebook post said.

Hun Sen thanked the Czech people and government for their assistance to



Prime Minister Hun Sen (right) meets with Martin Vavra, the new ambassador of the Czech Republic at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh on Monday. SPM

Cambodia, the post said.

The Czech Republic has written off a large amount of the Kingdom's debt while the remaining debt has been used to assist Cambodia with the construction of schools and the development of the social sector, noted the Facebook post.

The prime minister welcomed and congratulated Martin Vavra on his appointment as the ambassador of the Czech Republic to Cambodia.

Kin Phea, director of the Royal Academy of Cambodia's International Relations Insti-

tute, told *The Post* on June 14 that cooperation in areas such as trade, economy or tourism is normally encouraged during such meetings. Phea welcomed the commitment, saying the trade volume between Cambodia and the Czech Republic has been small.

"We need to push for more in all areas so that the relationship can be deepened and more important," he said.

In 2019, Hun Sen visited the Czech Republic to further strengthen ties.

The Czech government has listed Cambodia as one of

six priority countries for development partners and has provided many scholarships to Cambodian students over the years. In the 2021-2022 academic year, the country provided 17 postgraduate scholarships in English to Cambodian students.

Cambodia and the Czech Republic – then Czechoslovakia – established diplomatic relations in 1956 under then-Prince Norodom Sihanouk. This year marks the 65th anniversary since the establishment of Czech-Cambodian diplomatic relations. ■

## National

# Kandal keeping an eye on river traffic from the capital

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

THE Kandal provincial authorities are keeping a close eye on the movements of Vietnamese settlers in boats and floating houses with fish farming cages to prevent them from docking in the province after they were ordered to move by the Phnom Penh Municipal Administration.

Kandal provincial governor Kong Sophorn advised all district and town authorities to ban any settlers from docking. "At this time, the provincial hall has no plans to pull down or move existing boats, floating houses or fish farming cages in the river. But we will not allow those who are moving from the river in Phnom Penh to dock in the river in Kandal province," he said.

Over the past two days, and especially on June 13, more than 100 floating structures owned by Vietnamese settlers have moved from Phnom Penh's Chbar Ampov, Chroy Changvar and Daun Penh districts to the K'am Samnar area in Kandal province's Kien Svay and Lvea Em districts, according to Lvea Em district police chief Heng Sophal.

"Some of them have tried to dock at Point Poy Koh Teuk Khleang in Kien Svay and



Floating houses are seen in Kandal province's Kien Svay district on Monday. HEAN RANGSEY

Lvea Em districts. But our police will not allow them to dock there and pushed them off to make way to the K'am Samnar area," he said.

Kien Svay district governor Ou Chheang told *The Post* that he is leading forces to observe the situation along the river and prevent settlers from illegally docking there.

"We will allow them to cross,

but we will not allow them to dock here. Our forces are keeping a close eye on them and will not allow them to dock at the riverbank. At this time, most of them have gone beyond our area of control," he said.

He added that in Kien Svay district there were already many boats, floating houses and fish farming cages owned by Vietnamese settlers, but he

had not been given permission from the provincial administration to pull down or move those constructions.

As of June 14, more than 80 per cent of the targeted structures on the river in the capital have been pulled down and moved. The Phnom Penh municipality has given the remaining 20 per cent three to five days to move, according to local officials. ■

# Fishing season closed down through Sep 30

Nov Sivutha

THE Battambang Provincial Administration announced that the freshwater fishing season will be closed from June 1 to September 30. The closure is to maintain and protect fishing resources and reduce illegal fishing.

Provincial deputy governor Soeum Bunrith told *The Post* on June 13 that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has informed other municipal and provincial administrations about the closures including Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Kratie, Monduliri, Oddar Meanchey, Siem Reap, Tbong Khmum, and parts of Phnom Penh and Kandal province located north of the Chaktomuk River.

Bunrith said that after the announcement, the provincial authorities told communities to stop fishing. If they continued, it would be a violation of the law and authorities would take legal action. During this time, all fishermen are prohibited from using illegal fishing methods.

"Specialists and local authorities who take money from people and allow them to commit fishing offences would be subject to legal action. Anyone involved with offenders, illegal fishing in flooded forests, and logging



Officers stop a group of fishermen in Battambang province. FACEBOOK

offences must stop immediately. If illegal activities continue, perpetrators will face the law without any exception," Bunrith said.

Provincial agriculture department director Chhim Vachira said freshwater areas in conservation parks and management areas of the province cover nearly 200,000ha.

Hor Sam Ath, deputy head of Sdei Kraom Rohal Suong Fishing community in Ek Phnom district's Prek Luong commune, said closing the fishing season might be taken by some people as a stop to fishing. It is only temporary measure to reduce illegal fishing.

He supported the move, saying authorities have to manage freshwater areas efficiently to prevent illegal fishing, especially in conservation areas. ■

## ANNOUNCEMENT

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# Ministry reviews early bail conditions

Lay Samean

THE Ministry of Justice is planning a draft announcement concerning conditions that prisoners released on bail must follow. The ministry's initiative aims to reduce overcrowding and prevent the spread of Covid-19 in correctional facilities.

The plan came after ministry secretary of state Kim Santepheap held a meeting on June 10 to review the announcement for monitoring and integrating prisoners back into society.

Santepheap told *The Post* on June 13 that the draft was drawn up in accordance with the Criminal Code. Prisoners with good behaviour will be eligible for release on bail.

"In order to implement the spirit of this code, the ministry is required to prepare an announcement on monitoring and integrating inmates into the community. We release them on bail. So, this draft is under review and not yet final," he said.

However, he said the announcement would be issued soon as a commission for releasing prisoners would also be set up.

He added that the draft focused on time served and behaviour. The deciding factor for these two issues and some other practical problems would be taken into consideration in making a decision whether to release a prisoner. The nature of the case is taken into account and even serious offences would be considered.



Inmates are transported from the Phnom Penh Municipal Court. POST STAFF

"The draft means a prisoner who is released on bail can re-enter society, but it is subject to certain conditions. Failing to fulfil these obligations means the prisoner will return to jail to complete the sentence," he said.

Santepheap explained that the draft was different to a pardon or a sentence reduction. Cambodia has always granted these clemencies five times a year during national holidays.

Am Sam Ath, deputy director for rights group Licadho, said the initiative might help reduce prison overcrowding and prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"This draft could facilitate the release of some prisoners on bail and we want it to be

implemented soon no matter what the conditions are, but with transparency," he said.

"Through this mechanism, we allow them to return to their families and help them earn a living. What is more important is to control risks relating to Covid-19. If prisoner numbers are reduced, it is easy to control," he said.

However, he requested that officials implement the announcement in a transparent and fair manner, especially giving priority to vulnerable inmates.

"As a civil organisation, we are deeply concerned about the Covid-19 pandemic because prisons are crowded. Civil society organisations

working on human rights have been providing input relating to the release of prisoners on bail," he said.

Sam Ath suggested that prisoners in pre-trial detention, prisoners who are near the end of their sentences, and prisoners with health issues be released.

The draft comprises of five articles which detail the conditions of a prisoner's release on bail. They include having a permanent address, receiving vocational training, fulfilling obligations to society, not associating themselves with certain individuals such as accomplice, instigator or the victim of crime, and not be in possession of a weapon. ■

# Carbon markets preserve forests while providing community funds

Youn Dara

**C**OMMUNITIES in natural protected areas in Preah Vihear province have been demonstrating their commitment to conserving forests with the help of forest rangers from the Ministry of Environment and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS Cambodia).

An added benefit to conservation may have been found with forest carbon credit sales. Carbon credit sales in the province could potentially provide money for community development as well as funding to further safeguard the natural resources there.

While visiting the province's Chheb Wildlife Sanctuary on June 10, environment ministry spokesman Neth Pheaktra said the ministry and WCS Cambodia have been studying the feasibility of selling carbon credits for the northern regions that include some natural protected areas.

He said the ministry had allowed WCS Cambodia to implement a REDD+ project – emissions reduction through forest carbon – in four natural protected areas including the Kulen Prum Tep, Chheb and Prey Preah Roka wildlife sanctuaries

and the Phnom Tbeng Natural Heritage Site.

"Samples are taken and studied from 43 locations in these four areas so that other specialists can evaluate them before they are to be put up for sale on the voluntary market abroad," Pheaktra said.

Lach Vin, the head of the community in the Prey Andong Dang Philit Protected Area of the Chheb Wildlife Sanctuary, said community members welcomed the project because it would help improve their livelihoods in addition to increasing tourism.

"Currently, our community members are assisting the forest rangers and WCS Cambodia in protecting our natural resources, the forests and wild animals and the wildlife sanctuaries with vultures, white-winged wood ducks and giant conches. Our residents have decent livelihoods that benefit from the implementation of other projects in our area.

"We have learned the value of natural resources and the forest, so we are committed to helping the rangers care for the natural resources and forests. If we care for the forests sustainably, this natural heritage will be passed down to the next generation," Vin said.



Environment ministry and WCS Cambodia officials work to measure the carbon storage and sequestration capacities of forest ecosystems. YOUSOS APDOULRASHIM

Nong Deng, the head of the community in the Prey Chheb natural protected area of the Chheb Wildlife Sanctuary, said his community members continued to collect sustainable forest by-products such as mushrooms, fruits and tree resin.

"Our community members take turns patrolling the forest along with the ministry's rangers three times per day.

"Previously, people logged timber and cleared the forests to take the land for themselves. But since the forest in our area was designated as protected conservation areas, not many people have been logging in them anymore," he said.

Deng added that hundreds of families in his community were

continuing to tap tree resin to sell it and that they could earn on average \$500 a month from the job.

WCS country director Ken Serey Rotha said the organisation is currently implementing biodiversity conservation projects in the four natural protected areas covering more than a half million hectares.

He said the areas had supported the livelihoods of nearly 10,000 families and more than 30 species of wild animals under global threat.

The organisation had drawn on its experiences from successfully setting up the carbon project in the eastern part of the country in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary.

"Cambodia has so far succeeded

in selling carbon credits on the voluntary market. It is a point of pride that we have participated, especially within the Southeast Asian region – Cambodia is the first country to sell [carbon credits]," Rotha said.

Pheaktra agreed. "This carbon market is really important for Cambodia and it highlights an improvement of our natural protected areas."

He added that since 2016, Cambodia has generated \$11.6 million from selling carbon credits to major companies like Disney, Kering, Intuit, Shell and Gucci.

Cambodia is also studying and implementing pilot carbon credit projects in the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary along with the Mitsui Company. ■

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"RHB Reflex is in line with the bank's digital agenda in responding to the growing needs of our SMEs, commercial and corporate customers by providing a seamless and easy to use banking experience via a secure online platform.

"Especially during this Covid-19 pandemic, RHB Reflex will provide you the flexibility in managing your businesses under the new normal way of living," said head of RHB Bank Cambodia Plc business banking Sok Leng.

With RHB Reflex, customers can manage their portfolio via information management module by having access to

their account balance, account statement, transaction history and real-time payment status.

Customers can also manage their business payments with RHB Reflex single and bulk payment module that allows them to perform their own account transfer, third party transfer, FAST payment, local payment, overseas telegraphic transfer as well as staff payroll.

RHB Reflex is business-ready for the customers to do their banking anytime and anywhere in a secure IT environment. This helps to speed up customers' workflow and improve business cash flow with customised authorisation matrix.

RHB Reflex is another of the bank's innovative product that is rolled out to complement its suite of digitalised services to delight and meet the constantly evolving needs of its customers.

RHB Bank Cambodia had

earlier this month rolled out its goWave by RHB – a content platform with the aim of increasing the financial literacy of Cambodian young adults through useful bite-sized articles, video capsules, and financial tools spread across the digital space, including its own website, as well as social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube).

For more information on RHB Reflex, please visit: <https://www.rhbgroup.com.kh/>

### About RHB Bank Cambodia

RHB Banking Group is the fourth largest fully integrated financial services institution in Malaysia with more than 100 years of service excellence and regional presence in ASEAN countries. Established on July 9, 2008 it has 12 branches currently with operations in Phnom Penh and the provinces.

RHB banking group in Cambodia also offers investment banking services that cover capital market and brokerage; to complement the services of its commercial banking activities. ■

<https://www.rhbgroup.com.kh/>  
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**KEY FUNCTIONS**

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# Business

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USD / KHR	USD / CAD	USD / CNY	USD / JPY	USD / MYR	USD / SGD	USD / THB	AUD / USD	EUR / USD	GBP / USD	ABA <sup>1</sup> NATIONAL BANK OF CANADA GROUP
↓ 4,103	↑ 1.2157	↑ 6.3987	↑ 109.71	↑ 4.1150	↑ 1.3270	↑ 31.13	↓ 0.7713	↓ 1.2113	↓ 1.4089	



**TRADING INFORMATION ON CAMBODIA SECURITIES EXCHANGE** Date: June 14, 2021  
Auction Trading Method (ATM)

NO	STOCK	CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW
1	ABC	16,240	16,300	16,300	16,240
2	GTI	4,280	4,320	4,320	4,260
3	PAS	14,640	14,540	14,660	14,520
4	PEPC	3,320	3,330	3,330	3,300
5	PPAP	15,000	15,000	15,020	14,980
6	PPSP	2,260	2,280	2,280	2,250
7	PWSA	7,260	7,260	7,300	7,240



## CRF: Economic strategy to lift milled rice sales

Thou Vireak

**T**HE Cambodia Rice Federation (CRF) says it's optimistic that the implementation of a three-year economic diplomacy strategy recently rolled out by the government will boost exports and better expand international markets for Cambodian milled rice.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation earlier this year launched the 2021-2023 strategy, aimed at boosting international trade, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), promoting tourism and fostering cultural exchanges.

The ministry on June 11 held a first meeting with the private sector to discuss how to best implement the strategy.

CRF president Song Saran, who attended the meeting, expressed confidence that proper implementation of the strategy would diversify Cambodia's export products and destinations, and promote international trade.

"Through the economic diplomacy strategy, Cambodia will be able to take advantage of opportunities from new markets for Cambodian products and services, as well as strengthen cooperation in international economic partnerships fo-

cused on bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements," he said.

He said that the strategy is in line with CRF's pursuit of promoting the reputation of quality Cambodian milled rice on the international market, to expand the Kingdom's exports and achieve the government's target of shipping at least one million tonnes of milled rice abroad per year.

"I urge all milled rice exporters to participate in friendship programmes to enhance already-good relations and to exchange views directly with players.

"I call on them to continue to promote the 'Malys Angkor' brand of Cambodian milled rice at Khmer restaurants abroad, which is a good strategy to promote Khmer milled rice directly through food," Saran said.

Delivering a speech at its January 18 launch, foreign minister Prak Sokhonn likened the strategy to a compass designed with four cardinal orientations – improving the efficiency of economic diplomacy; accelerating economic growth; reducing dependence on foreign aid; and promoting Cambodia's interests in the region and beyond, in a manner consistent with these four orientations.

Through the strategy, the ministry will act as a facilitator and promote ex-



An expert inspects milled rice to be exported to China. XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

isting mechanisms to attract FDI and increase growth in bilateral and multilateral trade, as well as to propagate Cambodian culture and values abroad and bring in more tourists, he said.

"Ensuring the successful implementation of this economic diplomacy strategy requires the participation of all stakeholders, so I hope that the ministries, institutions and stakeholders will increase support for the implementation of this strategic document to promote and expand national economic interests," Sokhonn said.

Hong Vanak, director of International Economics at the Royal Academy of Cambodia, sees the strategy

as a "good initiative" that will play a role in promoting the Kingdom's economic development.

He told *The Post* that regional and global economic slowdowns caused by the Covid-19 crisis had prompted the ministry to draw up the strategy, to increase efficiency in the work of its diplomats in a bid to boost economic and political development.

"In Cambodia, we have the tourism and agriculture sectors as those with the potential to attract foreign investment, and the government has made a number of reforms to develop key infrastructure to support them," Vanak said.

The Kingdom exported 233,031 tonnes of milled rice worth \$166.81 million to 47 international markets in the first five months of 2021, down by more than 34 per cent in volume year-on-year from 356,097 tonnes, according to the CRF.

The CRF ascribed the decline to a global shipping container shortage and rising maritime transport prices, fuelled by ongoing Covid disruptions in trade flows and other sectors that support international trade.

Cambodian milled-rice shipments to EU destinations were particularly hard hit, with sharp declines logged in January-May, it added. ■

## Cashew nut export partnership looking to scale up

Hin Pisei

LOCAL enterprise Chey Sambor Cashew Nut Processing Handicraft is exploring the possibility for their partner-

ship with Top Planning Japan Co Ltd (TPJ) to generate a monthly 20 tonnes of processed cashew nuts for export.

This comes after a second batch of the nuts was success-

fully delivered to TPJ on June 13, according to In Lai Huot, owner of the business, based in southwestern Kampong Thom province's Kampong Svay district.

She told *The Post* on June 14 that her enterprise was seeking funding and studying the feasibility of expanding production to be better equipped to meet a likely post-Covid surge in demand for cashew nuts.

Lai Huot stressed that her business' products are not exclusively for export to Japan, but they also stock local markets and stores, such as Khmer Organic Cooperative Co Ltd, and are sold to wholesale and retail clients in the provinces, particularly in tourist areas surrounding Kampong Thom's Sambor Prei Kuk temple complex.

"I have not yet said when the plan to build up a 20-tonne [per month] capacity will come true, because we do not have enough capital," she lamented.

Recently, Lai Huot mentioned that Covid had led to a drop in orders. Chey Sambor has delivered just two batches of cashew nuts TPJ, seven tonnes last month and nine on June 13.

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries director for Agro-Industry Kong Pheach emphasised cashew nuts' high potential for export to international markets.

The expansion plans are consistent with government policy to promote the prestige of agricultural products, as encapsulated by their share of the Kingdom's total exports, as

well as to create new jobs for farmers, extract additional value from production, and reduce imports of raw materials, he said.

"Processed cashew nuts are a high-potential commodity for export to many countries around the world. As far as I know, many companies are currently contacting Cambodia for them, he said, voicing support for Chey Sambor's ambitions.

In Cambodia today, there are more than 500,000ha of cashew plantations, with an average yield of 1.5 tonnes per hectare per year, according to Pheach.

During a visit to the business on June 13, agriculture minister Veng Sakhon encouraged the community to find more partners to acquire planting and

processing techniques, as well as to discover new markets.

"Once a product is marketed, it will lead to increased production, which in turn leads to increased revenue, creating more new job opportunities. This is the desire of the Royal Government – to promote agricultural exports in the context of the spread of the Covid-19 disease," he said.

In 2020, the Kingdom exported 218,981 tonnes of cashew nuts, an increase of 8.24 per cent from 202,318 tonnes in 2019, the ministry reported. Cashew nuts are exported to Vietnam, Japan, Russia, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, France, South Korea, Turkey and Bangladesh, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Laos. ■



Cashew nut exports rose 8.2 per cent in 2020. HONG MENEHA

# Imports of beer, wine, spirits plummet nearly half last year



The Kingdom imported \$17.89 million worth of beer, wine and spirits last year, down by 49.78 per cent from \$35.61 million in 2019. HONG MENEHA

Thou Vireak

THE Kingdom imported \$17.89 million worth of beer, wine and spirits last year, down by 49.78 per cent from \$35.61 million in 2019, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

Chan Davy, founder of Far East Import Export Co Ltd, an authorised importer and distributor of PengWine, a boutique wine from the Mai-

po Valley of Chile, notes that the global Covid-19 crisis has put severe stress on the wine import industry.

"We have been importing red wine from Chile since before the Covid-19 outbreak. So far we have not sold it all," said Davy.

Heng Noeun, an accounting officer at Phnom Penh Beer Co Ltd, said that even the local beer market had been shaken up by the pandemic, leading to a signifi-

cant drop in sales of beers, wine and other spirits to serve demand related to tourism and entertainment.

"Covid-19 has led to a global economic crisis that has led to a tendency to reduce spending on unnecessary goods," he said.

There are 13 registered brewery/beverage plant operators in the Kingdom, data from the Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation show.

These are Inter-Matrid Beverage (Cambodia) Co Ltd, Hanuman Beverages Co Ltd, Vattanac Brewery Co Ltd, Ana Water and Smiler Beverage Co Ltd, Asian Sunrise Co Ltd, Heineken (Cambodia) Co Ltd, Cambrew Ltd, Daun Penh Food and Beverage Co Ltd, Khmer Beverage Co Ltd, Far East Import Export Co Ltd, Kingdom Breweries (Cambodia) Ltd, Media GB Enterprise Co Ltd, and Phnom Penh Beer Co Ltd. ■

# Mega First eyes greener expansion

ARMED with a healthy balance sheet, Malaysia's Mega First Corp Bhd (MFCB) plans to pare down debts further as it explores more renewable energy projects in Southeast Asia as part of its expansion drive.

As it is, it has a low net gearing level of 0.26 times and after taking into account its yearly capital expenditure (capex) and dividend payouts, it has excess cash flow of at least 200 million ringgit (\$48.6 million) from the projected annual operating cash flow of at least 500 million ringgit.

After its meeting with MFCB management, PublicInvest Research said MFCB continues to see a clear and focused ap-

proach towards all the core segments, namely, renewable energy, resources and packaging.

"While exploring for new opportunities in hydropower projects, the packaging segment will be a key earnings driver for the group on the back of its massive capacity expansion in paper and flexible packaging, and also through the acquisition of a 75 per cent stake in Stenta Film," it said.

Based on that outlook, it has revised upwards its earnings forecast by two-to-four per cent. This is based on the expected earnings contribution from Stenta Film, as the recent acquisition will help double

the packaging sales in the next two years.

"Based on our higher pre-tax margin of 13-15 per cent for the packaging segment, it should skyrocket from financial year 2020's 9.4 million ringgit to 33 million ringgit, 56 million ringgit and 75 million ringgit for fiscal years 2021-2023, respectively," said PublicInvest.

Led by that, the research house has also lifted its target price from RM8.63 a share to RM8.73 and retained its "outperform" call on the stock.

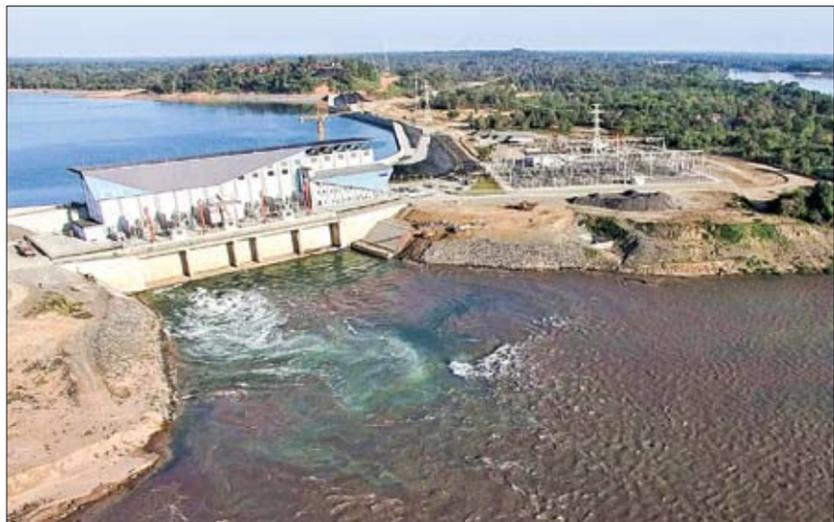
Elaborating on the paper and packaging business, the research house expects continued growth with capacity expansion and robust demand although there will be some cost pressure coming from resin, paper and logistics.

It said resin, which is the largest cost component, has shot up more than 60 per cent and MFCB is unable to fully pass on the additional costs to consumers due to competition and time-lag effects.

"We have a strong three-year CAGR [compounded annual growth rate] sales growth expectation of more than 50 per cent for the packaging unit, which could be the second largest revenue contributor to the group this year," the research house said.

It added that when combined with the contribution from Stenta, packaging sales are expected to deliver more than 500 million ringgit in 2023, making up more than 60 per cent of the group's topline. On the renewable business it said the company had an appetite for growing 50-100MW a year but was unable to find good customers who can fulfil its criteria.

THE STAR (MALAYSIA)/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■



Developed by Malaysia's Mega First Corp Bhd, the Don Sahong hydroelectric plant in Laos, near the Cambodian border, was commissioned and linked to the Kingdom's national grid last year. FACEBOOK

# Strategy poised to pave way for digital economy

Continued from page 1

technologies. In this sense, key stakeholders that include the government and the private sector are required to work together to initiate and develop digital platforms that synergise and co-create digital products and services to serve the people," he said.

Besides, he said, to further promote and accelerate the digital adoption among people through broader and enhanced access to public services, the government will take the lead in establishing state digital platforms with enhanced digital contents and diversified applications.

As part of a rapid recovery strategy, a number of key digital platforms and infrastructure have already been introduced. Of note, the government's groundbreaking Cambodia Data Exchange (CamDX) platform will be a fundamental platform for online business registrations.

Other important examples are the National Payment Gateway, the digital payment and central bank digital currency (CBDC) Bakong Project, as well as other initiatives in digital signature and identity authentication.

Pum added: "Cambodia is optimistic that the digitalisation and digital transformation that they will promote will build more resilient and inclusive economic development in the context of post-Covid-19 economic recovery.

"The success of this transfor-

mation will require the full support and collaboration from all stakeholders," he said.

And early this month, the government launched the 15-year policy framework touted by Pum, for the Kingdom's evolving digital socioeconomic environment to pave the way for a thriving digital economy, as a new engine of economic growth.

The Cambodia Digital Economy and Social Policy Framework 2021-2035 is expected to inject fresh momentum into the Kingdom's information and communication technology (ICT) sector and calibrate the pace of its development to leapfrog into the digital era, as a promising new source of opportunities to boost productivity, efficiency and economic competitiveness.

As of May 2020, the number of active mobile phone subscriptions across the Kingdom's six operators was 20,481,051, down by 0.08 per cent year-on-year, the latest data from TRC show. This figure was the equivalent of 124.09 per cent of the total population at the time.

At the same time, the number of landline and fixed-line subscriptions numbered just 52,480 as of the end of May last year, slipping 21.62 per cent from the end of May 2019.

The number of mobile internet subscriptions across Cambodia's seven providers also recorded a 2.36 per cent drop to 14,863,435, whereas fixed broadband internet subscriptions across the Kingdom's 37 providers logged a 33.07 per cent climb to 249,132. ■



The Kingdom received \$89.1 million in investment from Vietnam from January to May, accounting for 16.3 per cent of the country's total outbound investment capital. VIETTEL

# VN investment abroad triples in January-May

VIETNAMESE firms poured \$546.7 million into overseas projects in the first five months of 2021, more than triple the figure of the same period last year.

Of the sum, \$144 million was from 21 newly-licensed projects, down 11.3 per cent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Planning and Investment.

Meanwhile, \$403.2 million was pumped into nine existing projects, surging 22-fold year-on-year, the ministry said.

A major part of the capital outflow - \$271 million - was poured into the science-technology sector, accounting for 49.5 per cent of the total. The wholesale and retail sector came next with \$148.4 million or 27 per cent, following by the agro-forestry-fisheries sector and auxiliary services.

Fifteen countries received investment from Vietnam from

January to May with the US the top receiver with \$303 million, holding the lion's share of 55.4 per cent. It was followed by Cambodia with \$89.1 million or 16.3 per cent. Next were Canada and France with \$32.1 million and \$32 million, respectively.

Vietnamese firms have increased their overseas investments in recent years to expand their global reach.

As of May 20, Vietnam had 1,420 valid overseas projects worth a total of nearly \$22 billion, mainly in the sectors of mining, with 36.4 per cent of total capital, while agro-forestry-fisheries had 15.3 per cent.

Laos was the largest receiver for Vietnam's overseas investment, making up 24 per cent of the total capital, followed by Cambodia (13.1 per cent) and Russia (13 per cent). VIET

NAI NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■

## Business

## Indonesia to tax rich more, big business less

**W**HILE struggling to finance a deficit budget to pull the country through a health crisis and economic recession due to the pandemic, Indonesia is seeking to increase taxes on high-income individuals and families.

Through an amendment to Law No 6/1983 on general provisions and tax procedures (KUP), the government is proposing a higher rate of personal income tax targeting people with earnings of at least five billion rupiah (\$350,000) a year. These people are also known as high-net-worth individuals (HNWI).

The proposal goes along with other increases in value-added tax, a new carbon tax and another proposal for tax amnesty.

Finance minister Sri Mulyani said the proposed tax increase for HNWI was from 30 to 35 per cent.

"It is not that big," she told lawmakers during a hearing with lawmakers at the House of Representatives.

Indonesia currently groups its taxpayers into four different income brackets ranging from less than 50 million rupiah to over 500 million rupiah per year. Each bracket is subject to one of four tax rates, namely five per cent, 15 per cent, 25 per cent and 30 per cent.

The new rate for HNWI will add a new income bracket, meaning that the 30 per cent tax rate will apply to those earning 500 million to five billion rupiah. Individuals who earn more than five billion rupiah per year will be charged the proposed 35 per cent rate.

The top tax rate is still lower than those in other countries, such as China (45 per cent), India (42.7 per cent) or the average for the Euro area (41.7 per cent) according to data aggregator website Trading Economics.

The government has proposed the tax reforms as it tries to control the state budget deficit caused by the pandemic, which is 5.7 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) this year.

With low spending and domestic



The Indonesian government is proposing a higher rate of personal income tax targeting people with earnings of at least five billion rupiah (\$350,000) a year. FREPIK

consumption, the government has yet to bring the country out of economic recession. At the same time, it is still lacking sources to finance the deficit.

According to a government regulation in lieu of law (Perppu) on state spending and financial relief efforts for Covid-19 emergency response, the government is obliged to bring the deficit back to under three per cent of GDP by 2023.

The government's plan on taxing the rich more has been lauded by experts, saying that applying a higher rate to the rich could play a significant role in tackling the inequality in Indonesia. Moreover, many international organisations have projected the number of wealthy individuals in Indonesia to grow significantly over the next few years.

"That is why taxation policy should target the richest more," Danny Dar-

ussalam Tax Center (DDTC) managing partner Darussalam told *The Jakarta Post* on June 10.

World Development Indicators (WDI) data from the World Bank show Indonesia's richest 20 per cent held over 45 per cent of the income share as of 2019. The figure has worsened within two decades from 38 per cent.

Concurring with the World Bank, Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Report says around 82 per cent of the population had less than \$10,000 but about one per cent of the population had \$100,000 to \$1 million as of 2019.

On the other hand, the number of HNWI in Indonesia is forecast to grow around 41 per cent over the next five years, while the number of ultra-high net worth individuals (UHNWI), or those with a net worth of at least \$30 million, is expected to grow 27 per cent, according to a re-

port by consultancy Knight Frank.

Despite sounding good on paper, implementing the policy would be challenging. Darussalam said most of Indonesia's HNWI relied on their passive income that is subject to final income tax.

"So, it would not follow a progressive rate as in personal income tax," said Darussalam, adding that the government could consider changing the final income rate instead.

Other problems also lie in the nature of how HNWI wealth accumulation works, in that it spans generations. He suggested trying wealth-based taxation instead of just personal income.

Moreover, the task is even more challenging because HNWI possess wide access to the global financial system and the country's political power, implying they could do whatever it takes to reduce or evade taxes.

Taxation directorate general spokesperson Neilmaldrin Noor said the agency was aware of such obstacles but remained optimistic the government could convince HNWI taxpayers that their money was used for the greater good and managed well.

The agency will also strengthen its supervision. Either internally to prevent misconduct among officials, or to prevent any possible tax evasion.

"As a matter of prevention efforts, we are strengthening tax regulations and systems, human resources and IT [internet technology] through tax reform," Noor told *the Post*.

Ah Maftuchan, executive director of Jakarta-based think tank Prakarsa and co-coordinator of the Tax and Fiscal Justice Asia (Tafja) network doubted raising the tax rate for HNWI could bring significant change, as the government is planning to cut corporate income tax, aiming to boost investment.

Historically, he said, corporate taxes contributed more than income taxes from high-income individuals. From 2017 to 2020, corporate taxes contributed 26 to 31 per cent of total tax revenues every year, while taxes on high-income individuals were always less than two per cent.

According to the proposed amendment of the KUP Law, corporations will be subject to a lower income tax rate of just 20 per cent by 2022 and three per cent lower if listed on the bourse. This figure is lower than the current rate of 22 per cent that had been cut from 25 per cent through the Perppu on the coronavirus pandemic response.

"Raising the HNWI tax rate is good, but lowering corporate tax altogether will just make them nullify each other," Maftuchan told *the Post*.

Maftuchan argued the current corporate tax rate was already low enough since it had been cut from 28 per cent starting in 2010. Continuing to cut it could make it difficult for Indonesia to achieve a higher tax income to finance the state budget. THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

## More US financial giants tiptoeing into cryptoassets

INVESTING in bitcoin and other digital currencies remains a risky game where the rules could change significantly, but the payoff could be big.

In response to this dilemma, several leading US financial heavyweights are staying on the sidelines, while an increasing number are proceeding cautiously into the growing world of cryptoassets.

"My own personal advice to people – stay away from it," JPMorgan Chase

CEO Jamie Dimon said recently, before adding: "That does not mean the clients don't want it."

JPMorgan, the biggest US bank by assets, is currently assessing how it can help clients transact in cryptocurrency, Dimon said last month at the bank's annual meeting.

Formerly something of an investment sideshow dominated by computer geeks, cryptocurrencies are sparking greater interest among main-

stream investors after a big jump in bitcoin prices in 2020 and early 2021.

On June 10, the venerable giant State Street announced the creation of a new digital finance division.

On June 9, the head of online trading firm Interactive Brokers vowed to establish online trading of cryptocurrencies on the platform by the end of the summer.

Like its rivals Charles Schwab and Fidelity, Interactive Brokers does not now offer bitcoin trading on its platform, although it does give clients the option to invest in some assets that include cryptocurrencies or bitcoin futures.

Investors who want to trade bitcoin can currently turn to Robinhood or the cryptocurrency specialist Coinbase.

ForUsAll, a platform that manages retirement accounts for small businesses, on June 7 announced an agreement with Coinbase that allows clients to invest up to five per cent of their balances in cryptocurrencies.

Investment bank Morgan Stanley in March said it would allow wealthier clients to invest in bitcoin funds, while Goldman Sachs recently established a team dedicated to trading cryptocurrencies.

The CEOs of Wells Fargo, Citigroup

and Bank of America said at a congressional hearing in late May that they are approaching the cryptocurrency landscape with caution.

Fidelity Investments, which established a digital assets division in 2018 to execute cryptocurrency trades for hedge funds and other institutional investors, filed papers with US securities regulators for a bitcoin exchange traded fund (ETF).

The move could potentially expand cryptocurrency investments to a broader range of individual investors.

Still, many financial players are reluctant to dive into an investment realm associated with black markets that has sparked interest from US and global regulators.

There is also remarkable volatility, with bitcoin beginning 2021 at around \$30,000 and hitting \$63,000 in April before falling back to \$34,000 this month.

Ian Gendler of research firm Value Line said: "Speculators and those suffering from Fomo [the 'fear of missing out'] will surely continue to flock to cryptos in the hopes of achieving huge returns."

But Gendler urges clients to avoid cryptocurrency investments, citing the elevated risk and the lack of a tangible asset compared with putting

money into commodities or a company. Bitcoin and other digital money is also not backed by governments, he noted.

"Cryptocurrencies are only worth what the next investor is willing to pay," he said.

Still, many in finance do not see cryptocurrency as a transient phenomenon.

CFRA Research vice-president Chris Kuiper said: "We do believe bitcoin, and more broadly cryptoassets, are a new and emerging asset class that will likely be here to stay."

CFRA expects "the large banks as well as smaller financial institutions to continue to adopt them, particularly as the infrastructure and legal/regulatory framework continues to be built out", Kuiper added.

The Basel Committee, which coordinates regulation among central banks, this week proposed new rules that would require banks to set aside capital for cryptocurrency investments.

Gary Gensler, the new head of the Securities and Exchange Commission, has also said he wants to bolster protections for cryptocurrency investors, telling CNBC that such investors "don't have full protections that they have in the equity markets or in the commodity futures market". AFP



More financial players are edging into cryptocurrencies, but many large US firms are still on the sidelines. AFP

# World

## Netanyahu removed as Israeli parliament votes in new gov't

**A**MOTLEY alliance of Israeli parties on June 13 ended Benjamin Netanyahu's 12 straight years as prime minister, as parliament voted in a new government led by his former ally, right-wing Jewish nationalist Naftali Bennett.

Bennett, a tech millionaire and former special forces commander, was sworn in at the helm of an ideologically divided eight-party bloc united only by disdain for the country's longest-serving prime minister.

Netanyahu, 71, in typically combative style, vowed shortly before his defeat that "if it's our destiny to be in the opposition, we'll do so with our heads high until we take down this bad government and return to lead the country our way".

Beloved as "King Bibi" and "Mr Security" by his right-wing supporters and condemned as the "crime minister" by his critics, Netanyahu has long dominated Israeli politics.

But on June 13, a vote in the Knesset legislature following weeks of political drama ended his government with a razor-thin majority of 60 to 59 in the 120-seat chamber.

Delighted revellers packed a square near the Knesset (parliament) in Jerusalem and poured into Tel Aviv's city centre to celebrate Netanyahu's



Israel's outgoing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (centre) walks away from his successor, incoming Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, after being ousted. AFP

fall.

Thronged of people gathered in the coastal city, clapping, cheering and waving flags.

In Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, Netanyahu's opponents launched into celebrations, waving "Bye bye Bibi" placards.

Bennett, 49, told the Knesset before the vote that his government "represents all of Israel".

He said the country, after four inconclusive elections in under two years, had been thrown "into a maelstrom of hatred and in-fighting".

"The time has come for dif-

ferent leaders, from all parts of the population, to stop, to stop this madness", he said, to angry shouts of "liar" and "criminal" from right-wing opponents.

Netanyahu, who is battling corruption charges in a trial he dismisses as a conspiracy, has been the dominant Israeli politician of his generation, having also served a previous three-year term in the 1990s.

His supporters have hailed him as a defender of Israel who has been tough on arch-foe Iran, but who also struck a series of historic normalisation deals

with Arab nations last year.

Being ousted from the top job leaves Netanyahu more exposed to his legal troubles, denying him the chance to push through legislation that could give him immunity.

Bennett, a former defence minister under Netanyahu, vowed to keep Israel safe from Iran, promising that "Israel won't let Iran have nuclear weapons", a goal the Islamic republic denies pursuing.

Netanyahu claimed Iran was seen "celebrating" the birth of a "dangerous", weak left-wing government.

The diverse anti-Netanyahu bloc was cobbled together by the secular centrist Yair Lapid, a former TV presenter.

It spans the political spectrum, with three right-wing, two centrist and two left-wing parties, and even an Arab Islamic conservative party.

Lapid, 57, is to serve as foreign minister for the next two years before taking over from Bennett.

Gaza's rulers Hamas said political developments in Jerusalem wouldn't change their position on Israel.

"The form the Israeli government takes doesn't change the nature of our relationship," said the group's spokesman Fawzi Barhoum.

"It's still a colonising and occupying power that we must resist." AFP

## Nuke arms decline stalls as arsenals modernised

AS nuclear nations commit to renewing and sometimes expanding their arsenals, a decline seen since the early 1990s seems to have stalled, with some signs of a numerical increase, researchers said on June 14.

"The reduction of nuclear arsenals that we have gotten used to since the end of the Cold War appears to be leveling out," Hans Kristensen, associate senior fellow at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (Sipri) Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Programme, told AFP.

The amount of nukes among the nine nuclear-armed states – the US, Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea – totalled 13,080 at the start of 2021, a slight decrease from 13,400 a year earlier, Sipri estimated.

However, this includes retired warheads waiting to be dismantled, and without them the combined military stockpile of nuclear arms rose from 9,380 to 9,620.

Meanwhile, the number of nuclear weapons deployed with operational forces increased from 3,720 to 3,825, the report said.

Of these, some 2,000 were kept in a "kept in a state of high operational alert", meaning for launch in a matter of minutes.

"We're seeing very significant nuclear modernisation programmes all around the world and in all the nuclear weapons states," Kristensen said.

He added that nuclear states also seem to be raising "the importance they attribute to the nuclear weapons in their military strategies".

This change can be observed in both Russia and the US, which together possess over 90 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons, Kristensen said, stressing it was too early to say if the new US administration under President Joe Biden would deviate from the strategy under his predecessor Donald Trump.

"I think that the Biden administration is signalling quite clearly that it is going to continue the overwhelming main thrust of the nuclear modernisation programme that was underway during the Trump years," the researcher said, noting the programme was

started under Barack Obama.

The US and Russia continued to dismantle retired warheads, but both had about 50 more in "operational deployment" at the start of 2021 than a year earlier.

At the same time, the "New START" nuclear arms reduction treaty between the US and Russia was extended for another five years in early 2021, albeit at the last minute.

The extension was important to "create stability" and "it was doubly important" as other treaties – such as the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, banning intermediate and shorter range land based missiles – have expired.

The report authors said "all the other seven nuclear-armed states are also either developing or deploying new weapon systems or have announced their intention to do so".

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) this month reported that nuclear nations increased spending on their arsenals by \$1.4 billion to \$72 billion last year, even as the pandemic raged.

In August, the parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – or most countries in the world – are set to meet in New York for a review held every five years.

Under the treaty nuclear powers commit to "pursue negotiations in good faith" both on the "cessation of the nuclear arms race" and "nuclear disarmament", but as many are renewing their arsenals, other parties may question their commitment.

While we might see a reversal of the trend since the end of the Cold War, Kristensen cautioned there were a lot of uncertainties about where future developments might lead.

"Is it just that the reduction phase is over, or are we even going to see an increase because countries might want more weapons," he said, adding that China's growing stockpile may also affect US and Russian readiness to disarm.

The situation during the Cold War was much more "intense", added Kristensen.

The number of nuclear weapons peaked at over an estimated 70,000 in 1986. AFP

## G7 falls short on Covid, climate action

GROUP of Seven (G7) leaders on June 13 vowed to start delivering one billion doses of Covid vaccines and to step up action on climate change, in a US-led summit call to arms.

In a final communique issued at their first physical summit in nearly two years, the leaders of the elite club largely hewed to US President Joe Biden's push to regain the West's cohesion after Donald Trump's tumultuous tenure.

"We will harness the power of democ-

racy, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights to answer the biggest questions and overcome the greatest challenges," Biden and his colleagues from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan said.

At a G7 news conference before he headed on to a NATO summit and talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Biden said his fellow leaders agreed "America is back at the table and fully engaged", adding that NATO's mutual

defence was a "sacred obligation" for the US.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, host of the summit in southwest England, had described Biden as a "big breath of fresh air" and told reporters on June 13 that the G7 stood united anew in its "democratic values".

But the pledge on vaccines for poorer nations fell far short of the 11 billion doses that campaigners say are needed to end a pandemic that has claimed nearly four million lives and wrecked economies around the globe.

Likewise, the G7's pledges to deliver more aid for countries at the sharp end of climate change, and to phase out fossil fuel investments, were decried as too little, too late ahead of a UN summit in November.

"This G7 summit will live on in infamy," said Max Lawson, head of inequality policy at aid group Oxfam. "Faced with the biggest health emergency in a century and a climate catastrophe that is destroying our planet, they have completely failed to meet the challenges of our times."

India and South Africa, who took part in the G7 talks as guests, had pressed for the gathering to waive intellectual property rights on Western vaccines. But Britain and Germany were notable holdouts.

Campaigners also complained the G7 had failed to flesh out how it will pay for a newly agreed "Nature Compact" – aimed to protect 30 per cent of the world's land and oceans from despoliation by 2030.

AFP



Climate campaigners protested that the Group of Seven's (G7) position on the crisis did not go far enough. AFP



Russia and the US seem to be raising the importance they give to nuclear weapons in their military strategies. AFP

# Viral support for Rohingya in Myanmar anti-military camp

**A**NTI-JUNTA protesters flooded Myanmar's social media with pictures of themselves wearing black on June 13 in a show of solidarity with the Rohingya, a minority group that is among the most persecuted in the country.

Since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power in a February 1 coup, an anti-junta movement demanding a return to democracy has grown to include fighting for ethnic minority rights.

The mostly Muslim Rohingya – long viewed as interlopers from Bangladesh by many in Myanmar – have for decades been denied citizenship, rights, access to services and freedom of movement.

Activists and civilians took to social media on June 13 to post pictures of themselves wearing black and flashing a three-finger salute of resistance, in posts tagged "#Black4Rohingya".

"Justice must [be] served for each of you and each of us in Myanmar," said prominent rights activist Thinzar Shunlei Yi on Twitter.

Local media also showed a small protest in Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon, with black-clad demonstrators holding signs in Burmese that said they were "protesting for the oppressed Rohingya".

By evening, the #Black4Rohingya hashtag was trending on Twitter in Myanmar with more than 332,000 mentions.

June 13's show of support from the mostly Buddhist, ethnic Bamar-majority population is a far cry from previous years, when even using the term "Rohingya" was a



Myanmar has been rocked by mass protest since the military ousted civilian leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi in February. AFP

lightning rod for controversy.

In 2017, a bloody military campaign in Myanmar's west sent some 740,000 Rohingya fleeing across the border into Bangladesh carrying accounts of rape, mass killings and arson.

The military has long claimed the crackdown was justified to root out insurgents, and Suu Kyi also defended the army's conduct by travelling to Dutch city The Hague to rebut charges of genocide at the UN's top court.

The Myanmar public was largely unsympathetic to the Rohingya's plight, while activists and journalists reporting on the issues faced vitriolic abuse online.

Prominent Europe-based Rohingya activist Ro Nay San

Lwin told AFP the online campaign is a yearly effort to raise awareness – but June 13 was "the first time" he had seen it go viral in Myanmar.

"I am so happy to see those inside Myanmar joined this campaign. I am more hopeful to have a stronger solidarity from them," he said.

A recent announcement from the shadow "National Unity Government" (NUG) – made up of ousted lawmakers working to topple the junta – has also extended an olive branch to the minority group, inviting them to "join hands ... to participate in this Spring Revolution".

The NUG has been branded as "terrorists" by the military regime, while junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has dismissed the

word "Rohingya" as "an imaginary term".

Since the coup, more than 860 people have been killed in brutal crackdowns by security forces, according to a local monitoring group – a death toll that has drawn alarm from the international community.

On June 11, UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said Myanmar has plunged from a "fragile democracy to a human rights catastrophe" – pointing with particular concern at the escalating violence in regions like Kayah, Chin and Kachin states.

State-run television on the evening of June 13 condemned Bachelet's comments, saying that the international body "should not be biased". AFP

# Vietnamese experts call on community to keep donating blood

HEALTH experts in Vietnam have called on the community to maintain blood donation activities to ensure blood sources for emergency aid and treatment at hospitals on the occasion of World Blood Donor Day (June 14).

Vietnam Red Cross Society president and National Steering Committee for Voluntarily Blood Donation Mobilisation permanent deputy head Nguyen Thi Xuan Thu said Covid-19 seriously impacted blood donation mobilisation and collection activities.

"On this occasion, we call on those who are healthy enough to donate blood, which is the responsibility and sacred duty of every citizen. I also request steering committees at all levels and relevant authorities to honour and praise typical examples of blood donation and mobilise relatives and friends to participate in blood donation, especially amid the Covid-19 outbreak in the community," said Thu.

The appeal was made as blood shortages have occurred across the country due to a decline in blood donors amid the Covid-19 pandemic spreading in many provinces and cities nationwide.

National Institute of Haematology and Blood Transfusion director Bach Quoc Khanh said: "Each unit of blood is valuable as a lifebuoy for the patient. I want each person to stay healthy so that they can keep a regular blood donation rhythm and to give patients the safest blood source."

Khanh said the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected blood donation activities and blood transfusion safety globally as well as in Vietnam. Despite challenges of organising blood donations during the pandemic, millions of people around the world still continue to make efforts to donate blood, including blood for treating Covid-19 patients.

"Over one million blood donations in our country in 2020 and tens of thousands of people who came to donate blood during the Covid-19 outbreak have shown the community's responsibility in helping the

health sector overcome the blood shortage.

"I'm very happy to say that all blood donors are safe and none tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. Ensuring the safety of blood donors, medical staff and blood recipients is always the number one priority of blood transfusion facilities," Khanh said.

On the occasion, 100 outstanding blood donors across the country will be honoured for their contribution to the country's blood donation mobilisation movement, 14 of them have donated blood 50 times or more.

Huynh Thanh Hung from Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) has donated blood 74 times, followed by Nguyen Hoang Nhon also from HCMC with 70 blood donations, Phan Vu Quoc Chinh from HCMC donated blood 64 times, Nguyen Van Lam from Tra Vinh province 63 times and Nguyen Van Nguyen from Hanoi 60 times. They have donated a total 3,220 units.

With the theme "Give blood and keep the world beating", World Blood Donor Day aims to raise global awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products for transfusion and of the critical contribution voluntary, unpaid blood donors make to national health systems.

The day also provides an opportunity to call governments and national health authorities to provide adequate resources and put into place systems and infrastructure to increase the collection of blood from voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors.

In Vietnam, the health sector has received more than 1.4 million blood units, equivalent to nearly 1.5 per cent of the population participating in blood donation; in which, 99 per cent of blood came from voluntary blood donors.

In the first five months of this year, blood donation campaigns such as the Red Spring Festival and the All People's Voluntary Blood Donor Day (April 7), the whole country collected nearly 425,000 blood units. VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

# M'sia deports conspiracy theorist wanted in France over abduction

MALAYSIA on June 13 deported a leading figure in conspiracy circles who is wanted in France over the kidnapping of an eight-year-old girl, sources told AFP.

Remy Daillet, his pregnant partner and three children were arrested late last month on the holiday island of Langkawi over their residency status.

The Frenchman and his family were taken under tight security to Kuala Lumpur airport and put on a flight to Singapore, a source familiar with the case, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP.

From there, they were due to board an Air France flight for Paris, arriving early on June 14, the source said.

However, the family were still in Singapore late on June 13 after Daillet's pregnant partner was hospitalised.

"We fear for the baby," Daillet's lawyer Jean-Christophe Basson-Larbi told AFP.

"Mr Daillet and his children



Frenchman Remy Daillet-Wiedemann, seen here in 2009, has been deported from Malaysia over allegations of his involvement in the kidnapping of an eight-year-old girl in France. AFP

are under the care of the Singapore police service," he added.

The kidnapped girl, identified as Mia, was taken in mid-April from her grandmother's home in France by several men employed by their mother.

Six men and the mother were indicted over the abduction following an intense five-day search that ended in Switzer-

land.

According to some of the men, the mother's associates were activists who believe that children in care are unfairly taken from their parents.

Mia's mother had lost custody of her daughter and was no longer allowed to see her alone or speak with her on the telephone.

Investigators believe Daillet,

known to police as a proponent of extremist conspiracy theories and a populist takeover of the state, may have helped organise the abduction.

French prosecutors in April issued an international arrest warrant for Daillet, who had been living in Malaysia for several years.

But he was detained over his residency status, making the process of deportation quicker.

Daillet is a former regional leader of France's centrist MoDem party before he was excluded in 2010.

After the abduction, Daillet posted a video in which he said that his organisation "returns children kidnapped by the state to parents, at their request. There was absolutely no kidnapping".

In earlier videos, he has supported the idea of a coup d'etat and voiced opposition to taxes, vaccines and masks.

Mia was returned to her grandmother's care. AFP



Youngsters donate blood at the 2020 Chu nhat do (Red Sunday) Blood Donation Festival in Vietnamese capital Hanoi. VIET NAM NEWS

# 'Deep disillusionment' over EU, US and Covid-19

Opinion

John J Metzler

EUROPEAN majorities seem troubled and deeply disillusioned over the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which has turned into a crisis of confidence in the EU, and equally stirred lingering doubts about the US as a partner and ally.

This gloomy assessment is reflected in a current poll which "finds that confidence in the EU has collapsed during the Covid-19 pandemic", and that in countries such as Germany, France, Spain and Italy, a majority of citizens now see the European project as "broken". As dangerously, the report finds that "confidence in the United States is still low".

Equally many Europeans view Turkey as a greater "rival" or "adversary" than China or Russia.

The results were released on the cusp of major international conferences such as the Group of Seven (G7) meeting, the NATO summit, and a meeting between US President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. The polling by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) commissioned through groups such as Alpha and You Gov, surveyed citizens in 12 EU member states, shows citizens' deep disillusionment with their national political systems.

Europe's deep political funk stems largely from the EU's haphazard vaccine response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of respondents in France (62 per cent), Germany, (55 per cent), and Italy (57 per cent) view the European project as "broken".

The report adds: "Despite this crisis of public confidence, there is still a widespread belief that greater European Union cooperation is needed."

In France, for example, where citizens go to the polls in 2022 for presidential elections, two-thirds of those surveyed (66 per cent) hold the view that their national political system is broken. That feeling translates to (80 per cent) in Italy and (80 per cent) in Spain.

The poll reveals very troubling trends in how the US is viewed. Though the Biden administration has redoubled efforts to rhetorically smooth Transatlantic ties, only one in five respondents view the US as an "ally" that shares Europe's "values and interests." Many (44 per cent) see the US as a "necessary partner" they must "strategically cooperate with on the international stage". Higher numbers in Poland, Denmark and Hun-



A flag of the EU flying outside the European commission headquarters in Brussels. AFP

gary view the US as an ally that shares their "values and interests".

For example, 80 per cent of Poles view the US as an "ally" or "necessary partner." This is equally true among the Danes, Dutch, Hungarians and Portuguese. But the numbers shift to 58 per cent support in Germany and 61 per cent among the French.

Many Europeans see a world of strategic partners rather than alliances; a

Equally over 40 per cent of those in Germany, Denmark, Austria and France viewed China as a "rival or adversary".

Considerable majorities in key countries such as the Netherlands, Austria, Germany and Sweden wanted to see the EU criticise Turkey and China when they violate human rights and democratic values. Overall Germany exhibits a growing nervousness over Turkey; these views emerging largely because of Erdogan's

this was an opportunity that was passed up by the leadership in Brussels, to the disappointment of Europeans. The pivot from "self-doubt" to "self-assurance", which Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission President) spoke of in 2019, failed to manifest and a crisis of confidence instead set in."

The report warns: "There's been a major collapse in Germans trust in the European Union".

Naturally such an undertow from the ongoing pandemic may play a unpredictable role as Germany approaches pivotal national elections in late September.

Viewing the bigger picture, there's no doubt that the American image has taken serious political hits in Europe especially since the Iraq War in 2003. European media outlets, very often reflecting the US mainstream media animus, had glibly demonised the George W Bush and especially Donald Trump administrations. This reality still negatively impacts on transatlantic relations. It needs to be resolved. THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

The writer is a UN correspondent covering diplomatic and defence issues and the author of *Divided Dynamism: The Diplomacy of Separated Nations: Germany, Korea, China.*

## Europe's deep political funk stems largely from the EU's haphazard vaccine response to the Covid-19 pandemic

sad observation given the extraordinary role the US played through the Marshall Plan and the subsequent NATO alliance forged in the post-war era.

The survey underscores an interesting fact; large numbers of Europeans view Turkey, given its geographical proximity, rather than China as their chief adversary. A majority in France (53 per cent) and Germany, (52 per cent) saw Turkey as an EU "rival or adversary".

authoritarian Islamist regime.

Yet here's an ironic twist; Russia is not viewed as a "rival" or "adversary" but instead as a "necessary partner" by many Europeans. Remarkably, only 17 per cent of respondents to ECFR's poll see Russia as an adversary; this figure drops down to five-seven per cent among Bulgarians and Italians.

ECFR senior policy fellow Jana Puglierin stated: "As our data shows,

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# Lifestyle

## Greek 'neo-muralist' draws on mythology to depict how pandemic has affected people

**A**N ATHENIAN "neo-muralist" is blending Greek mythology and Byzantine iconography with graffiti and street art to depict how the coronavirus has forced people the world over to put down roots.

From Bangkok to Rabat and Zurich, Fikos has painted the walls of many cities, but he's now adding a splash of colour to the sun-beaten facades of the Cypriot capital Nicosia.

"Here in Cyprus there are not many murals yet," he says. "It's the beginning phase of the street art scene in Cyprus, so ... they are impressed and kind of awed when they see this happening."

The 33-year-old spends time wandering the narrow back alleys of Nicosia's Old City in search of walls to use as a canvas.

The one he chose for his latest project is the cracked veneer of a crumbling mud-brick house in an abandoned, dusty lot near the UN-patrolled buffer zone that divides the city's Greek and Turkish-speaking halves.

The Greek artist, who describes himself as a "neo-muralist", says he has been living on the Mediterranean island for the past year amid the Covid-19 pandemic, a theme reflected in his latest piece.

Standing on a wobbly platform, he gets to work with a brushstroke along the brow of Amarcus, the perfume-maker of the mythical goddess Aphrodite, whose fate he says befits life in the time of the coronavirus.

Bit by bit, a sketch evolves into a jade-green male figure with leaves sprouting from his head, branches protruding from his chest and roots extending from his legs.

"He got punished by the gods and got turned into a plant or flower," says Fikos, who explains that he used the story from Cypriot mythology as an analogy for the pandemic, during which people "have grown roots" by staying in one place for so long.

### Stigma

Fikos says Cypriots have taken to his artwork, unlike others who tend to attach to it the stigma of graffiti.

His works now adorn five facades

on the Greek-Cypriot side of Nicosia, which has been divided on ethnic lines since communal unrest erupted in 1963-4.

Fikos says he draws from a varied palette of influences, from art in ancient Greece to Egypt and Japan. One such artwork is located near the Green Line that divides Nicosia.

It shows King Onassagoras, who ruled the kingdom of Ledra around 672 BC, next to three female figures – one of them Nicosia, depicted as a woman split in half.

"I studied Byzantine painting since I was 13 years old in Athens, and I studied the art of the street in the streets," says Fikos.

"Street art has evolved from graffiti and it has different rules. You must leave your stamp," he says.

"But my point of view is totally different. I'm always trying to adapt my sketch to the environment and get inspired from the colours of the neighbourhood. My approach is more like fine art, I'd say."

### Mythology endures

Fikos says in the past he was unable to convince Athenians to let him paint over the garish graffiti that blankets the city, even for free.

But now his appeal is growing both at home and abroad, and he gets paid for his work.

Fikos says he has been commissioned to paint murals in many countries, including France, Ireland, Mexico, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine.

They can cover entire facades of buildings as high as 17 storeys, like one in Kiev, yet they aren't overbearing and don't look out of place.

"Most of the time they have something in mind, they give me a theme," Fikos says of his commissions.

"But ... I do my research on history, mythology or whatever I find appropriate, then I sketch and I start to paint."

Once the research is done, the process of painting the murals can take just two or three more days, he says.

"I'm mostly inspired by Greek mythology, because I trust that if these myths have survived, they must have something to say." AFP



Greek artist Fikos is blending Greek mythology and Byzantine iconography with graffiti and street art to depict how the coronavirus has forced people the world over to put down roots. AFP



A Cypriot man rides his moped past a mural by Greek artist Fikos, who describes himself as a 'neo-muralist', in the Cypriot capital of Nicosia on June 7. AFP

## Socialism gets Indian wedding, comrades to attend



P Mamata Banerjee (left), named by her grandfather after a left-wing politician in West Bengal, with groom named Socialism pose for a photograph during their wedding in the southern Indian city of Salem on Sunday. AFP

EVEN little Marxism won't miss out when Socialism gets married in southern India this weekend with his big brothers Communism and Leninism in attendance.

All are the progeny of A Mohan, a district secretary of the Communist Party of India in Tamil Nadu state where left-wing ideology still burns red-hot.

"My first son was born during the fall of the Soviet Union and everywhere in the news I was reading that this was the end of communism," Mohan said.

"But there is no end for communism as long as the human race lives on, so I named my first-born Communism," he said.

His next two sons were named Leninism – whose five-month-old son Marxism will also attend the nuptials on June 13 – and Socialism, the groom.

Pictures of the invitation to the wed-

ding, embossed with hammer-and-sickle emblems, have gone viral on social media.

Socialism's bride-to-be meanwhile is P Mamata Banerjee, named by her grandfather after a firebrand left-wing politician in West Bengal.

The fact that this other Banerjee ended several decades of communist rule in 2011 in the eastern state to become chief minister isn't spoiling the party.

India leaned more towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and names like Stalin, Lenin, Trotsky and even Pravda – the name of the USSR's state newspaper – are not unheard of, particularly in the south.

Tamil Nadu's current chief minister is MK Stalin, named by his father in honour of the Soviet communist dictator just days before he died in Russia.

Mohan said that there was nothing unusual about his sons' names – some of his "comrades" gave their children names such as Moscow, Russia, Vietnam and Czechoslovakia.

But he admitted that his boys, especially Communism, were sometimes teased at school. One hospital refused to admit Communism when he was three years old.

"They were scared of the name Communism and initially I faced a lot of troubles. But over time, things smoothed out," he said.

All three sons, now in their 20s, are fellow members of the local communist party, and Leninism named his son after none other than Karl Marx.

"Now I am waiting for a grand-daughter from one of my sons, who I will name Cubism," Mohan added. AFP

### Thinking caps

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### “WHICH WAY”

- ACROSS**
- 1 Aristocratic
  - 6 Consequently
  - 10 Burrowing animal
  - 14 Box-score item
  - 15 Bailiff's order
  - 16 Chimps, orangutans and such
  - 17 Be relentlessly convincing
  - 20 Filmmaker DeMille
  - 21 Give a valedictory
  - 22 Chatter incessantly
  - 24 Fail to keep a secret
  - 26 Less imaginative
  - 27 Ornament in relief
  - 29 Have an edge against
  - 31 Coast Guard off.
  - 32 Burn the surface of
  - 33 Sarcastically humorous
  - 35 Totally avoids
  - 40 Brunch selection
  - 41 Down Under gemstone
  - 43 "... \_\_\_ he drove out of sight ..."
  - 46 Neither under nor over par
  - 47 Becomes narrower
  - 49 Leads into wrongdoing
- DOWN**
- 1 Homer's neighbor
  - 2 Bobby the legendary Bruin
  - 3 Caustic criticism
  - 4 Frequent song subject
  - 5 Constructs, as a building
  - 6 Ugly bridge-guarder
  - 7 Homophone for "hymn"
  - 8 Employ
  - 9 Mermaid's habitat
  - 10 Native New Zealanders
  - 11 Sleep-inducing drug
  - 12 Adjective for Ash Wednesday
  - 13 Fragrant compounds
  - 18 Makes haste
  - 19 "Merchant of Venice" heroine
  - 22 "May I help you?"
  - 23 Ed of "Daniel Boone"
  - 25 Crime that may be petty or grand
  - 26 Work on an engine, in a way
  - 28 Cookie many take apart
  - 30 It may come from the blue
  - 33 Thing surrounded by water
  - 34 Trim photos
  - 36 Ipecac is one
  - 37 Guns an engine
  - 38 Numbers person?
  - 39 Taxi passenger
  - 42 Acid, in the '60s
  - 43 Chopin pieces
  - 44 Move to Florida?
  - 45 Appear
  - 47 Jazz combo, often
  - 48 Feelings of anxiety
  - 50 Use a steam iron
  - 52 Colorado ski center
  - 56 Actress Sorvino
  - 58 What it takes to tango
  - 59 Its symbol is an omega
  - 60 Princess's irritant in a fairy tale
  - 61 Ms. Peron
  - 62 D.C. pol

### Sudoku Pacific

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

9	2			5	3	7	1	
		7	9		6	4		3
6								9
	1	9	7	2		6	3	4
		2				1		
5	7	3		4	1	2	9	
2								7
3		6	5		7	8		
	4	5	2	9			6	1

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

### Monday's solution

G	N	A	W	S	G	E	M	S	N	A	K	E		
L	I	C	H	I	E	T	A	L	O	G	I	A		
A	S	T	I	R	T	U	G	O	V	A	L	S		
D	I	S	S	E	N	T	I	N	G	P	A	R	T	Y
C	O	B	E	R	A	S	E	G	N	P				
A	V	I	S	O	R	I	N	G	T	A	I	L		
R	E	P	U	B	L	I	C	A	N	P	A	R	T	Y
O	N	E	P	I	E	C	E	A	O	U	T	R	E	
L	S	D												
M	A	S	Q	U	E	R	A	D	E	P	A	R	T	Y
A	M	O	U	R	E	A	U	O	P	E	R	A		
M	E	S	A	S	A	B	C	R	E	N	A	L		
A	N	O	D	E	M	A	T	R	E	N	O	P	E	

### Monday's solution

1	3	6	4	9	7	8	2	5
7	5	8	1	6	2	9	3	4
9	4	2	5	3	8	7	1	6
3	7	9	8	5	1	4	6	2
6	8	1	2	4	3	5	7	9
5	2	4	9	7	6	1	8	3
4	6	3	7	8	9	2	5	1
2	9	7	3	1	5	6	4	8
8	1	5	6	2	4	3	9	7



Now passengers can get their locomotive and selfie fix as well as a cool drink aboard a stationary carriage converted into a hipster cafe. AFP

## All aboard cafe train that takes travellers nowhere

**T**RAIN travel has largely ground to a halt in Cambodia due to the coronavirus but railway fans can still get their fix aboard a stationary carriage converted into a hipster cafe.

The country has more than 600km of track extending from its northern border with Thailand to the southern coast, but decades of war and neglect have left vast stretches damaged and coronavirus has shut many remaining services.

A new airport rail link was closed last year and passenger trains to the seaport of Sihanoukville have been suspended since March when Cambodia was hit with the worst of its Covid-19 outbreak.

But a new train cafe – located at Phnom Penh railway station – has become a hub for Instagrammers and Facebookers looking for a selfie location and cold drink.

As authorities relax virus restrictions following a three-week lockdown in the capital, patrons have flocked to the cafe for impromptu photo-shoots and iced coffees.

Among them is Chan Thol, a 19-year-old student, who along with her friends has made the cafe a regular haunt.



A worker makes coffee in a train carriage converted into a cafe at Phnom Penh Royal railway station. AFP

She said it was a delightful change of scenery after weeks of boredom staying home.

"I come for leisure and to take pictures with my friends and enjoy the coffee," she said.

"It helps reduce my stress."

Se Sokunaphors, 27, said the train cafe concept was unique.

"I never took a train before. And this is fun," she said.

The carriage only required minor modifications including ripping out old sticky seats and replacing them

with comfy chairs, said Sak Vanny, manager of passenger operations for Royal Railway Cambodia.

"We had the idea to turn a train carriage into a train cafe in order to generate some income for the company and help staff members with work during the pandemic," she said.

"We did not make a lot of changes to it so that its original look wouldn't disappear ... When guests come here they can have the same feeling like they are riding a train." AFP



A woman has her picture taken next to a train at Phnom Penh Royal railway station. AFP

# Djokovic makes history with 19th Grand Slam title victory

**N**OVAK Djokovic claimed a 19th Grand Slam title and became the first man in 52 years to win all four majors twice when he came from two sets down to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas in a gripping French Open final on Sunday.

The world No1 triumphed 6-7 (6/8), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 in four hours and 11 minutes over the Greek 22-year-old who was playing in his first Slam final.

Djokovic is now just one major away from equalling the all-time record of 20, jointly held by Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

It was a second French Open crown for Djokovic after his 2016 victory and adds to his nine Australian Opens, five Wimbledon titles and three at the US Open.

The 34-year-old is the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to win all four Slams on multiple occasions and just the third in history.

Djokovic had also spent more than four hours on court on June 11 to knock out defending champion Nadal.

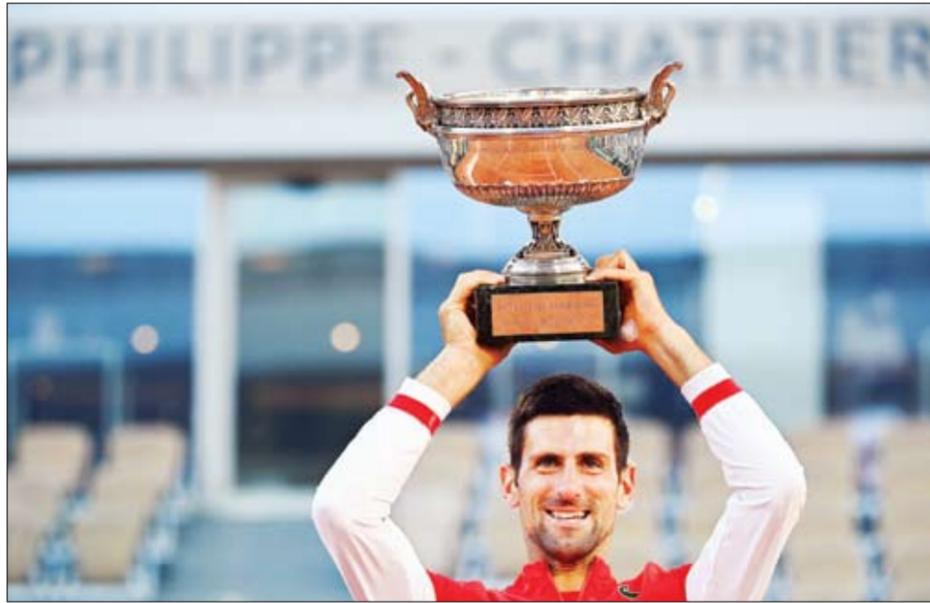
"It was an electric atmosphere. I want to thank everyone who has been with me on this journey," said Djokovic.

"I have played almost nine hours over the last 48 hours against two great champions, it was really tough physically over the last three days, but I trusted in my capabilities and knew I could do it."

Djokovic is the first man ever to win a Slam title by twice coming back from two sets down following his last-16 battle with Italian teenager Lorenzo Musetti.

Djokovic now has 84 career titles in total while the win on June 13 pushed him to the brink of \$150 million in prize money.

Next on the list is an assault on a calendar Grand Slam,



Novak Djokovic poses with The Mousquetaires Cup (The Musketeers) after winning against Stefanos Tsitsipas at the end of their men's final tennis match on June 13. AFP

only achieved in the men's game by Don Budge in 1937 and Laver in 1962 and 1969, by defending his Wimbledon crown and then winning a fourth US Open.

On top of that, Djokovic also wants the Olympic gold medal in Tokyo to complete the first ever Golden Grand Slam by a male player.

"His goal and our goal is to win the Olympics and then win the Grand Slam," said coach Marian Vajda.

Tsitsipas, meanwhile, said he was inspired to follow in Djokovic's footsteps.

"I had good run here so I am happy with myself," said Tsitsipas.

"Novak has shown what a great champion he is and I hope one day to have half of what he has achieved."

"I tried my best. I had a good run and I'm happy with myself."

Tsitsipas survived a nervy opening service game, having to save two break points.

Djokovic, by contrast,

didn't concede a point in his first three service games.

But suddenly he faced a set point in the 10th game courtesy of an ugly shank but saved it after a 26-shot rally.

## Fired-up Djokovic

Fired up by a time violation, Djokovic broke for the first time for a 6-5 lead but was unable to serve out the opener as a series of razor-sharp returns put Tsitsipas back on level terms.

In a dramatic tiebreaker, Tsitsipas saw 4/0 and 5/2 leads disappear.

He had to save a set point before claiming the opener after 70 minutes when Djokovic fired a forehand wide.

Dropping the opening set at this year's Roland-Garros was familiar territory for Djokovic.

He had to recover from two sets down to beat Musetti and lost the opener against 13-time champion Nadal on June 11.

Tsitsipas, 12 years the world No1's junior, broke again in the first game of the second set as the 2016 champion looked

increasingly weary in the 30-degree afternoon heat.

The Greek edged ahead 5-2 and pocketed the second set with his eighth ace of the contest.

But the top seed wasn't finished, breaking in the fourth game of the third set to cut the deficit.

Tsitsipas then called the trainer to treat a back problem which also gave him the opportunity to change the clay-covered shirt he'd worn since a first set tumble.

Thirty minutes later, it was two sets apiece after Djokovic secured a double break.

As the shadows swept across Court Philippe Chatrier, Tsitsipas' mood also darkened as he slipped 3-1 down in the decider.

As the clock ticked past four hours, he fought off two more break points in the seventh game but Djokovic was not to be denied his latest slice of history, taking the glory on his second championship point. AFP

# First spot on US swim team for Tokyo games seized by Chase Kalisz

CHASE Kalisz punched his ticket to the Tokyo Olympics on June 13, winning the men's 400m individual medley at the US swimming trials in a sizzling 4min 09.09sec with retired superstar Michael Phelps cheering him on all the way.

Kalisz, silver medalist in the event at the 2016 Rio Games, edged ahead of 19-year-old challenger Carson Foster on the breaststroke leg and held on through a furious closing freestyle leg that saw Jay Litherland overtake Foster on the final lap to finish second in 4:10.33 and secure a chance to improve on his fifth place finish in Rio.

It was a devastating outcome for Foster, who pushed hard through the opening butterfly and backstroke and at the halfway stage had a two-second lead on the field.

"I knew my race plan. I knew Carson was going to take it out fast [but] I know where I need to be to make my move off the breaststroke," said Kalisz, who became the second-fastest performer in the world this year behind Japan's Daiya Seto - who clocked a 4:09.02 at the Japanese championships in April.

After he and Litherland exchanged a hug, the veterans consoled Foster.

And as Kalisz gave an on-deck TV interview he got a hug from former training partner Phelps, who was in the stands for the opening night of the eight-day meeting.

He said Phelps, whose world record of 4:03.84 set in 2008 still stands, had long been a source of advice and support in tackling the daunting 400 IM.

"Apart from Jay Litherland he's the man training partner in my career," Kalisz said of Phelps, adding it was "awesome he's at trials."

Kalisz's time was his fastest since 2018. He didn't qualify for the 400m final at the 2019 world

championships, when he was battling a shoulder injury.

"I don't want to say I wasn't prepared last year, because I was," Kalisz said. "But I'm 27 now. My body needs rest a lot more than it ever has."

The first night of competition also produced a first-time Olympian in 19-year-old Emma Weyant, who rallied from third at the 300m mark to win the women's 400m medley in a world-leading 4:33.81.

Weyant powered past Hali Flickinger and Melanie Margalis, Flickinger earning a spot on a second Olympic team with a runner-up finish in the second-fastest time in the world this season: 4:33.96.

## Just race

"This morning, I'm not going to lie, I was really nervous so I tried to get that out of my system," Weyant said. "The plan tonight was just to race."

"That's something I really had to learn, stick to my race plan and not worry about everyone around me - stick to my strengths and always take it home on freestyle."

Keiran Smith smashed his previous personal best to earn a first Olympic berth with a victory in the men's 400m freestyle in 3:44.86.

He finished more than three seconds ahead of the field.

"It's a pretty good feeling!" Smith said. "I'm really excited with that swim and I'm looking forward to improving upon that against the rest of the world."

Michael Andrew, gunning for a first Olympic team, opened the trials with a bang, setting an American record in the 100m breaststroke heats and lowering it in the semi-finals with a time of 58.14sec.

"There's a lot left in the tank," Andrew said as he looked ahead to the final on June 14. AFP

# Biarritz risk sanctions after post-match invasion



Biarritz's Fijian lock Johnny Dyer breaks through the defence during the French Top14 rugby union playoff match against Aviron Bayonnais (Bayonne) at the Aguilera stadium in Biarritz on June 12. AFP

BIARRITZ are facing an inquiry by prosecutors over a mass pitch invasion by rugby fans flouting Covid distancing rules after their derby win over Bayonne on the weekend.

The government's top regional authority said on Sunday it was weighing sanctions against Biarritz for several alleged infringements of coronavirus restrictions, including the pitch invasion.

It said that the 5,000-fan limit was "obviously exceeded" for the evening contest on June 12 in Aguilera de Bayonne stadium.

It also accused the club of failing to systematically check that fans had a new Covid health pass and of flouting a ban on take-away alcohol sales in the stadium.

Biarritz countered that they had implemented "all the measures at its disposal to respect its health obligations" and that "there was no disturbance of public order".

"The pitch invasion was the occasion for a joyful moment shared by people who were vaccinated and/or

showed a negative Covid test before entering the stadium," club president Jean-Baptiste Aldige said in a statement.

He called it "a happy interlude that was good for everyone in this stressful period".

Biarritz were left rejoicing after the Basque club secured a return to the top flight of French rugby following a nailbiting play-off final against neighbours Bayonne that ended in a penalty kick tiebreak.

The post-match party after the evening game sparked new calls for the government to lift France's coronavirus curfew now that people are again allowed to attend large sporting events.

Last week, the government pushed back the curfew from 9pm to 11pm, with a promise to lift it completely on June 30 if a dramatic drop in infections seen recently continues.

But bars and restaurants are urging it to end the restrictions sooner, saying the curfew will prevent them

profiting from a highly anticipated France-Germany Euro 2020 football clash on Tuesday night.

The match is in Munich but Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu said over the weekend that no curfew exemption was planned so that fans could gather and watch the game together in bars.

An exception was allowed however for the epic French Open semi-final Friday between Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, when the government permitted fans to remain in the stadium past 11 pm.

In a sign of growing defiance of the rules, hundreds of young people in Paris defied police over the weekend with street parties.

"Nobody understands anything about all these rules anymore," Jean-Luc Melenchon of the France Unbowed opposition party told LCI television on June 13.

"The desire to live is always predominant," he said, adding: "Perhaps it's time to consider lifting the curfew." AFP

## Sport

## England make winning start at Euro 2020

**R**AHEEM Sterling ignited England's Euro 2020 campaign as the Manchester City forward's clinical finish sealed a 1-0 win against Croatia in their Group D opener on Sunday.

Gareth Southgate's side were struggling to break down Croatia until Sterling struck in the second half at sun-baked Wembley.

The 26-year-old's first goal at a major tournament – in his 13th game – was the perfect riposte to critics who questioned Southgate's decision to select him instead of Jack Grealish.

Sterling has endured a chequered relationship with England fans after being hounded following his tame performances at Euro 2016.

He also struggled to hold down a place with Premier League champions City this term, culminating in his lacklustre display in their Champions League final defeat against Chelsea.

But, days after he was given an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his anti-racism campaigning, Sterling enjoyed a perfectly-timed moment of redemption.

"I always said if I played at Wembley at a major tournament, I had to score. It's great to finally do that," said Sterling, who grew up close to the national stadium.

"There's a lot of different reasons why I haven't scored for my club and it's totally irrelevant now. I'm here with England and I'm enjoying my football.

"Have I justified my selection? I'm trying. I've focused on myself and tried to come



England's forward Raheem Sterling scores his team first goal past Croatia's defender Sime Vrsaljko during the UEFA EURO 2020 Group D football match on Sunday. AFP

into the tournament with a clear head."

In a rematch of the 2018 World Cup semi-final won by Croatia, England were hampered by a lack of cutting edge until Sterling came to the rescue.

Sterling's winner eased the tension at Wembley and got fans bellowing 'Football's coming home' in the hope

England can emulate their run to the semi-finals when they hosted Euro 96, and maybe even win a major tournament for the first time since the 1966 World Cup.

"I'm so pleased for Raheem. He was dangerous all game. His goalscoring record suggests we should have faith in him and I think he was motivated to show that," Southgate said.

In truth, this was a far from convincing performance, but Southgate will take heart from the way his team kept their nerve on a pressure-packed occasion.

"It's lovely to have given our fans and our country a really enjoyable afternoon. The players dealt with the big occasion really well," Southgate said.

Croatia boss Zlatko Dalic

added: "We have lots of optimism. We are looking forward to our next games and we can still reach our objective of moving into the next round."

#### England hold firm

England host neighbours Scotland in their second Group D match on June 18 before taking on the Czech Republic in their final game

of the first stage on June 22.

Southgate's surprise decision to select Calvin Phillips proved an inspired move as, along with Sterling, the Leeds midfielder was England's most accomplished performer.

Manchester City forward Phil Foden, his hair bleached blond, has drawn comparisons with England legend Paul Gascoigne, who sported the same eye-catching hair cut during Euro 96.

Foden was inches away from giving England the perfect start in the sixth minute with the kind of magic that made Gascoigne so beloved.

Collecting Sterling's pass on the edge of the area, Foden worked space to curl his left-footed shot off the far post.

But Southgate's men showed signs of running out of ideas after their early flurry failed to yield a goal.

Fans chanted for the introduction of Aston Villa playmaker Grealish after a slow start to the second half.

But Sterling quelled the mounting anxiety as England struck in the 57th minute.

Phillips was the catalyst as he burst forward past two Croatians and slipped a deft pass behind the defensive line.

Sterling arrived just ahead of his lunging marker and slotted a low shot past Dominik Livakovic from 10 yards.

In the absence of the injured Harry Maguire, Tyrone Mings and John Stones were up to the task as England's centre-backs held firm to clinch a victory in their opening European Championship game for the first time. AFP

## Dumfries gives Holland dramatic win over Ukraine

DENZEL Dumfries scored a dramatic late winner as the Netherlands marked their long-awaited return to a major tournament with a 3-2 victory over Ukraine in a remarkable Euro 2020 game in Amsterdam on Sunday.

Dumfries, the PSV Eindhoven full-back, headed in a cross from substitute Nathan Ake to complete a madcap second

half after the home side eased into a two-goal lead and then threw it away.

Captain Georginio Wijnaldum and Wout Weghorst both scored before the hour mark at the Johan Cruyff Arena, only for Andriy Yarmolenko and Roman Yaremchuk to briefly restore parity for Ukraine.

Frank de Boer's side got there

in the end and the victory provides a major lift to the Netherlands after their first game at a major competition in seven years.

"I thought we were very balanced and dominated the game so we would like to see the same again going forward. We can be proud," insisted De Boer.

They will now hope to build on it on June 17 against Austria, who beat North Macedonia earlier in the same Group C.

It was a brilliant game, and a crowd of around 16,000 created an atmosphere fit for the occasion at the home of Ajax, where supporters held up banners with messages of support for Christian Eriksen following the Denmark star's cardiac arrest on Saturday.

Eriksen played for Ajax before moving to Tottenham Hotspur in 2013 and several Dutch players remain close to the midfielder.

Defender Daley Blind played with him in Amsterdam and needed heart surgery himself

in 2019 after being diagnosed with myocarditis. He was in tears as he was substituted in the second half.

"Daley was quite emotional because he had some problems with his own heart," De Boer said.

"Even now Christian is one of his best friends and it is normal that there were lots of emotions."

After failing to qualify for Euro 2016 or the 2018 World Cup, the Netherlands were playing their first game at a major competition since coming third at the 2014 World Cup.

They had not won a game at a Euro in 13 years, since a 2-0 win over Romania at Euro 2008.

The emergence of the likes of Frenkie de Jong and Matthijs de Ligt has given supporters of the Oranje hope for the future.

Those supporters were in fine spirits ahead of the game, bedecked in orange as they filled the bars around the ground in the blazing sunshine,

thoughts of the pandemic appearing far away.

#### A new-look Netherlands

Yet Dutch optimism has been tempered by selection problems facing De Boer.

Juventus defender Matthijs de Ligt missed this game as he recovers from a groin injury, while Virgil van Dijk is not at the tournament at all.

Manchester United's Donny van de Beek withdrew from the squad and goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen was left out altogether after testing positive for Covid-19.

De Boer has switched to a 3-5-2 formation and has real stars in Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong and Memphis Depay up front.

The system has helped Wijnaldum – who has signed for Paris Saint-Germain – add a goal-scoring threat from midfield while Dumfries was a constant threat down the right.

He should have scored late in the first half with a free header, after Ukraine goalkeeper

Georgiy Bushchan produced a fine save to keep out a Wijnaldum volley.

The hosts got their reward shortly after the restart when Bushchan turned a dangerous low ball by Dumfries out into the path of Wijnaldum who fired home.

Weghorst then lashed in a loose ball after more good play by Dumfries, and the Netherlands seemed to be on easy street.

Goalkeeper Maarten Stekelenburg, at 38 the oldest player ever to represent the Netherlands at a major tournament, had not had much to do but then he was beaten in the 75th minute by a brilliant curling strike from Yarmolenko.

Yaremchuk then headed in a Ruslan Malinovskyi free-kick and Ukraine looked set to leave with a draw, but then Dumfries appeared.

"It is upsetting to lose like that at the end but not a tragedy," said Ukraine coach Andriy Shevchenko. "We still have two games to go." AFP



Netherlands' defender Denzel Dumfries (right) heads the ball to score the third goal during the UEFA EURO 2020 Group C football match against Ukraine on Sunday. AFP

## Germany with questions to answer ahead of France clash

**W**ORLD champions France open their Euro 2020 campaign on Tuesday night (at 2am Cambodian time) against an embattled Germany team eager to rediscover their best form in the first clash of two traditional European heavyweights in this year's tournament.

In tonight's other tie, defending champions Portugal take on Hungary in Group F (at 11pm).

Didier Deschamps' France head to Munich for the game – also in Group F – with a feud brewing between forwards Kylian Mbappe and Olivier Giroud but are still the title favourites, while the Germans are struggling and under pressure.

After 15 years in charge, their coach Joachim Low will step down after the European Championship and wants to forge a mentality "like 2014" when his squad "pulled together" to win the World Cup.

The French need no reminding of Brazil, where they bowed out in the quarter-finals when a Mats Hummels header sealed victory for Germany at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro.

The French got their revenge when Antoine Griezmann scored both goals in a 2-0 semi-final win at Euro 2016 before the hosts lost to Portugal in the final.

France won the last meeting between the neighbouring countries in 2018 when Griezmann again scored both goals to seal a 2-1 Nations League win in Paris.

Germany face a tough start to Euro 2020, with a match against holders Portugal four days after the France game before finishing their group campaign against Hungary.

Tension is already bubbling in the French squad after Giroud, who scored twice off the bench in a 3-0 friendly warm-up win over Bulgaria, complained about the passes he received, which Mbappe took to heart.

It promises to be a heated match after Chelsea defender Antonio Ruediger admitted Germany may need to be a "little



Germany midfielder Thomas Muller (left) and France forward Kylian Mbappe are set to meet in their nations' opening Euro 2020 Group F match on Tuesday night. AFP

dirty" to counter the French attack.

"Germany have good, young players and I don't believe they are as weak as they were," said France's Bayern Munich defender Benjamin Pavard.

### Germany wary of France front three

Low, 61, is desperate to land Germany a record fourth European title and enhance his reputation, dented after his side failed to get out of their 2018 World Cup group.

Three years after that debacle in Russia, Low must hope his shaky defence can cope with France, who could name a fearsome front three of Mbappe, Griezmann and the recalled Karim Benzema.

The Germans are expected to play with a 3-5-2 formation in an attempt to counter France's obvious threat.

But Germany have conceded 20 goals, keeping just three clean sheets, in their last 13 matches.

Low has assured fans that his players will wear the shirt "with pride".

"[We will] have to go through hell and

be capable of suffering if we want to achieve something. We will give everything," he said.

Germany reached at least the semi-finals of every major tournament from the 2006 World Cup to Euro 2016, but the last three years have been bleak.

After the World Cup disaster, they finished bottom of their 2018-19 Nations League group, were thrashed 6-0 by Spain last November and slumped to a 2-1 home defeat by minnows North Macedonia in World Cup qualifying in March.

"The blows of the last three years have left their mark," admitted centre-back Hummels, who along with Thomas Muller has been recalled after Low reversed his 2019 decision to axe the pair.

Bayern's Joshua Kimmich says the team are seeking redemption from their own fans.

"We have only disappointed people over the last few years," he conceded. "We can't always hide and say that we have a lot of quality. Now it's up to us." AFP

## Eriksen 'stable' as Dutch boss admits 'rollercoaster night'

NETHERLANDS coach Frank de Boer admitted the eve of his side's Euro 2020 opener against Ukraine in Amsterdam had been "a rollercoaster night" after he watched his former player Christian Eriksen suffer a cardiac arrest playing for Denmark against Finland.

"I had to leave the room," said De Boer, who coached Eriksen at Ajax earlier in the midfielder's career.

"I worked for five years with Christian and there are players in my team who still play with him or had a good bond with him when he played for Ajax.

"It was a rollercoaster night last night. We had planned to have a tactical meeting but we had to reschedule it for this morning because I didn't want to speak about football."

The Danish Football Union said on Sunday that Eriksen remained in hospital but was in a "stable" condition after collapsing and receiving CPR on the field.

The Netherlands, with several players who either played with Eriksen in Amsterdam or play with him now, overcame their emotions to beat Ukraine 3-2 on June 13 in Group C with a late winner from Denzel Dumfries.

Denmark's team doctor said on Sunday that there was still "no explanation" for why Eriksen collapsed during his country's opening Euro 2020 game against Finland, but confirmed he had suffered a cardiac arrest.

"He was gone, and we did cardiac resuscitation," team

doctor Morten Boesen told a press conference.

"How close were we? I don't know. We got him back after one defib [defibrillation], so that's quite fast," Boesen said.

However, the physician also said they had yet to discover the cause of the 29-year-old's heart attack.

"There's no explanation so far," Boesen said, adding that all tests done so far on the player, who is still in hospital, have come back fine.

"That is also one of the reasons that he is still in the hospital," the physician added.

The Inter Milan star suddenly collapsed in the 43rd minute of Denmark's Group B game against Finland on Saturday, laying motionless as medical personnel administered CPR.

And supporters in the Johan Cruyff Arena the following day displayed banners with messages of support for Eriksen, with one reading "Stay strong Eriksen" in English.

During the game, defender Daley Blind was in tears as he was substituted in the second half.

Blind starred in the same Ajax team as Eriksen and in December 2019 underwent heart surgery of his own after being diagnosed with myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle.

"Daley was quite emotional because he had some problems with his own heart," De Boer said.

"Even now Christian is one of his best friends and it is normal that there were lots of emotions, so it was definitely not easy for us." AFP

## 'Phenomenal' Sterling proves his doubters wrong

GARETH Southgate says "phenomenal" Raheem Sterling has set the tone for England's Euro 2020 campaign after the Manchester City forward silenced his doubters in Sunday's 1-0 victory against Croatia.

Southgate's side made a positive start to their bid to win the European Championship thanks to Sterling's second-half strike at Wembley.

With England labouring to break down a resolute Croatia, it was Sterling who latched onto Calvin Phillips' exquisite pass to fire home from 10 yards.

Sterling would also have endured fresh questions about his form if England had flopped after his lacklustre end to the season with City.

When Sterling was named in Southgate's starting line-up,

there were some who claimed it was a mistake to pick him instead of Jack Grealish.

The critics pointed to Sterling's tame display in City's Champions League final defeat against Chelsea and his long spells on the bench for the Premier League champions.

But Southgate is a firm believer in Sterling's qualities and his faith was rewarded

as the 26-year-old tore into Croatia to prove his point.

"He's been a reliable performer for us for a long period of time. I'm delighted for him as he went quite a few tournament matches without scoring before today.

"His work without the ball was phenomenal, positionally and his desire to track," Southgate said.

Linked with a move away

from City after scoring once in his last 16 appearances at the end of this season, Sterling found comfort in his return to north London, where he grew up just a few miles from Wembley.

"It's a great feeling for me playing at Wembley, not far from where I grew up as a young boy and seeing the stadium being built.

"There are a lot of different

reasons I haven't scored for my club and that's totally irrelevant now.

"I'm here with England, I'm enjoying my football and that's the most important thing.

"I just tried to focus and come into this tournament with a clear head. I know what I can bring to the team and it's as simple as that," Sterling said. AFP

SUNDAY'S RESULTS		TONIGHT'S MATCHES	
England	1 - 0	Croatia	
Austria	3 - 1	North Macedonia	
Netherlands	3 - 2	Ukraine	
		Hungary	GROUP F 11PM, 15 June Budapest
		Portugal	
		France	GROUP F 2AM, 16 June Munich
		Germany	